

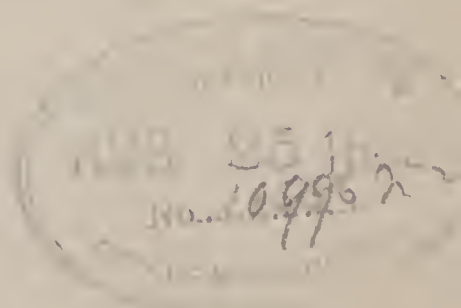
L'ABBÉ CONSTANTIN.

BY

LUDOVIC HALÉVY.

TRANSLATED BY

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THE ABBÉ CONSTANTIN.

I.

WITH a step vigorous and firm, an old priest was walking along the dusty highway in the full glare of a noonday sun. For more than thirty years the Abbé Constantin had been curé of the little village, that reposed in the plain, beside the bank of a narrow stream, called the Lizotte.

The Abbé Constantin had been walking for the past quarter of an hour, beneath the wall of the chateau of Longueval; he arrived in front of the high, massive, iron entrance gates, which hung on huge old stone pillars, brown and rusty with time. The curé stopped and gazed sadly at the two immense blue placards which were pasted on the gate posts.

The placards announced that on Wednesday, the

18th of May, 1831, at one o'clock in the afternoon, the domain of Longueval, divided into four parcels, would be sold by auction, [at the court house of Souvigny.

1st. The Chateau of Longueval and its dependencies, sheets of water, vast commons, with its park of three hundred acres, entirely enclosed in walls and watered by the river Lizotte: valued at six hundred thousand francs.

2nd. The farm of Blanche-Couronne, six hundred acres: valued at five hundred thousand francs.

3rd. The farm of La Rozeraie, five hundred acres: valued at four hundred thousand francs.

4th. The forests and timber lands of La Mionne, containing about nine hundred acres, and valued at five hundred and fifty thousand francs. ///

And these four amounts added at the bottom of the poster, gave the respectable sum of two millions and fifty thousand francs.

Thus was it to be divided, this magnificent estate, which for two centuries had escaped division, and had always been handed down intact from father to son in the family of Longueval. The placard, indeed, announced that after the provisional adjudication of the four parcels, there would be an opportunity to re-unite them, and setting a price on the whole

estate, but it was a very large tract, and in all probability no buyer would appear.


The Marchioness of Longueval had been dead six months; in 1873, she lost her only son Robert de Longueval; the three heirs were the grandchildren of the marchioness, Pierre, Hélène and Camille. They were forced to sell the estate. Hélène and Camille were minors. Pierre, a young man about twenty-three years old, had been a spend-thrift, was half ruined, and could not dream of buying Longueval.

It was noon. In an hour there would be a new master for the old chateau of Longueval. And who would this master be? What woman would take, at the fireside in the grand salon hung with antique tapestries, the place of the marchioness, the old friend of the country curé? It was she who repaired the village church; it was she who supplied and maintained the dispensary, kept at the parsonage by Pauline, the curé's servant; it was she who twice a week came with her big landau heaped full of children's clothes and flannels, to take the Abbé Constantin out with her, on what she called *a hunt for the poor*.

Thinking of all this the old priest resumed his walk—and then he also thought—the greatest saints have their little weaknesses—he also thought of his cherished habits of thirty years, so suddenly broken up.

Every Thursday and Sunday he was accustomed to dine at the chateau. How he was indulged, petted, spoiled. Little Camille, she was eight years old—would sit on his knee and say to him :

“ You know, Monsieur le Curé, that I am going to be married in your church, and grandmamma will send flowers enough to fill the whole church, fuller than for the month of Mary. It will be like a big garden, all white, all white, all white ! ”

The month of Mary ! So it was the month of Mary. Formerly at this season, the altar was almost hidden under the flowers brought from the greenhouses at the chateau. This year there were only a few poor bouquets of May-lilies and white lilacs in the gilded porcelain vases on the altar. Formerly, every Sunday at high mass, and every evening during the month of Mary, Mademoiselle Hébert, Madame Longueval's companion, played the little harmonium given by the marchioness. To-day the silenced harmonium no longer accompanies the voices of the choristers, and the hymns of the children. 

Mademoiselle Marbeau, the directress of the post, was a little musical, and in her heart would have been willing to take the place of Mademoiselle Hébert ; but she did not dare, she was afraid to be called priest-ridden, and denounced by the Mayor, who was a free-

thinker. That might injure her chances of advancement.

Here the park wall ended, this park whose every path was familiar to the old curé. The road now followed the banks of the Lizotte, and on the other side of the little river the meadows of the two farms stretched away, and beyond them the lofty forests of La Mionne. Divided—the estate was going to be divided! This thought broke the poor priest's heart. For him, all this had been kept together these thirty years. It was in a measure his property, his affair, this great estate. He felt himself at home on the soil of Longueval. More than once it had happened, that he stopped complacently by some immense field of wheat, to pluck a blade, shake out the grain, and say to himself:

“Ah! the grain is fine, firm and well filled. We will have a good harvest this year.” And, he would go on his way contentedly, across *his* fields, *his* pastures and *his* meadows. In short, by everything in his life, by all his habits, by all his memories, he was attached to his domain whose last hour had come.

The Abbé could see, at a distance, the farm of Blanche Couronne; its red-tiled roof stood out against the verdure of the forest. There, the curé still felt at home. Bernard, the marchioness' farmer was his friend; and when at nightfall the old priest had been detained in

his visits to the poor and sick and was a little weary of limb and empty of stomach, he stopped, supped with Bernard, regaled himself with a good dish of bacon and potatoes, emptied his mug of cider; then, after supper, the farmer harnessed his old black mare to his little chaise and took the abbé back to Longueval. All along the way they gossiped and quarrelled. The curé reproached the farmer for not coming to mass, and he would reply:

“The wife and daughters go there for me. You know very well, Monsieur le Curé, that that is the way it is with us. Women have religion for the men. They will open the gates of paradise for us.”

“And,” he added, roguishly, giving the black mare a little touch with his whip: “If there be one!”

The curé bounded on his seat in the old cabriolet. “What! If there be one? But there certainly is one!”

“Then you will be there, Monsieur le Curé. You say that it is sure—and I tell you that if—you will be there! You will be there, at the gate watching for your parishioners and continuing your interest in all our little affairs. And you will say to St. Peter, for it is St. Peter, isn’t it, who holds the keys of Paradise?”

“Yes, it is St. Peter.”

“Well! you will say to St. Peter, if he wants to shut the door in my face, under the pretext that I did not

go to mass, you will say, 'Oh, let him in just the same. This is Bernard, one of the marchioness' farmers, a good fellow. He belonged to the municipal council, and he voted for the support of the sisters when they wanted to break up their schools.' That will touch St. Peter, who will reply 'Ah well! go on, pass in Bernard; but it is only to please M. le Curé.' For you will still be curé up there, and curé of Longueval. It would be very cheerless for you in paradise if you could not still be curé of Longueval."

Curé of Longueval. Yes; all his life he had been nothing else, had never dreamed of being anything else, had never desired to be anything else. Three or four times he had been offered one of the large curés of the canton, with a good income, with one or two curates. He had refused. He loved his little church, his little village, his little parsonage. He was there alone, contented, doing everything himself, he was always ramb-ling over hill and dale, in sunshine and in rain, in wind and in hail. His body was hardened to fatigue, but his soul remained sweet and tender. He lived in his parsonage, a large country house, separated from the church only by the churchyard. When the curé stood on a ladder to nail up the branches of his peach trees, and pear trees, he could look over the wall and see the graves, over which he had said the last prayer,

and cast in the first shovelful of earth. Then, while he went on with his gardening, he said a little prayer for the repose of those of his dead, about whom he was anxious, and who might yet remain in purgatory. He had a simple, peaceful faith.

But among the tombs there was one which, more often than the others, had his visits and his prayers. It was the tomb of his old friend, Doctor Reynaud, who died in his arms in 1871, and under what circumstances? The doctor was like Bernard—he never went to mass, and he never went to confession; but he was so good, so charitable, so compassionate for all who were suffering! This was the great subject of the curé's meditation, his great anxiety. His friend Reynaud, where was he? Then he recalled the noble life of the country doctor, all courage and self-denial; he recalled his death, above all things his death! and he said to himself—

“In paradise! he must be in paradise! The good God may perhaps have given him a little purgatory—for form's sake—but he must have taken him out at the end of five minutes.”

All these things passed through the old curé's mind as he kept on his way towards Souvigny. He was going to the town to see the marchioness' lawyer, to learn the result of the sale, and find out who the new

masters of Longueval were to be; the abbé had still about a quarter of a mile to go before reaching the outskirts of Souvigny; he was walking just outside the park wall of Lavardens, when he heard voices above his head calling:

“Monsieur le Curé Monsieur le Curé!” At this point a long row of linden trees bordered a terrace, and the abbé raising his head saw Madame de Lavardens and her son Paul.

“Where are you going, Monsieur le Curé?” asked the countess:”

“To Souvigny, to the court house, to learn.”

“Stay here—M. de Larnac is coming immediately after the sale, to tell me the result.”

The Abbé Constantin went up the terrace. Gertrude de Lannilis, countess of Lavardens, had been very unfortunate. At eighteen, she committed a folly, the only one of her life, but irreparable. She married for love, in a transport of enthusiasm and disinterestedness, M. de Lavardens, one of the most fascinating and witty men of the time. He did not love her, and married her only from necessity—he had spent the last penny of his patrimony, and for three or four years had kept himself up in the world by all sorts of expedients. Mademoiselle de Lannilis knew all that, and did not deceive herself; but she said to herself,

“I love him so much that he must at last love me.”

From this came all her troubles. Her life would have been tolerable, if she had not loved her husband so much ; but she loved him too much. She succeeded only in wearying him with her importunities and her tenderness. He resumed and continued his former life, which was very dissolute. Fifteen years passed thus in a long martyrdom, which Madame de Lavardens bore with every appearance of passive resignation ; a resignation which was not, however, in her heart. Nothing could distract her, nor cure her of the love which tortured her.

M. de Lavardens died in 1869 ; he left a son fourteen years old, who already began to show all the characteristics and faults of his father. Without being seriously endangered, Madame de Lavardens' fortune was found to be somewhat undermined, and somewhat reduced. Madame de Lavardens sold her house in Paris, retired to the country, lived with very great system and economy, devoting herself entirely to the education of her son.

But even there, vexation and sorrow awaited her. Paul de Lavardens was intelligent, amiable, and good ; but rebelled absolutely against all restraint, and all labor. He drove to despair three or four tutors, who tried to put something serious into his head. He pre-

sented himself at St. Cyr, was not admitted, and then began to squander in Paris two or three hundred thousand francs, as fast and as foolishly as possible.

That done, he enlisted in the first regiment of the light infantry, just ordered to Africa, had an opportunity to make his *début* as one of a little expedition into Sahara, conducted himself with bravery, very soon was made quarter-master, and at the end of three years was appointed sub-lieutenant, when he fell in love with a young woman who played "La Fille de Madame Angot" in the theatre at Algiers. Paul had served his time; he left the service, and came back to Paris with his young opera-singer; then it was a ballet-dancer, then an actress, then a circus-rider. He tried all kinds. He lived the brilliant and miserable life of an idler. But he spent only three or four months in Paris. His mother made him an allowance of thirty thousand francs, and declared that so long as she lived, he should not have a cent more until he married. He knew his mother, and knew that she always kept her word in serious matters. So wishing to make a good figure in Paris, and lead a merry life there, he spent his thirty thousand francs between the months of March and May; and then quietly turned himself out to grass, as it were, at Lavardens, hunting, fishing, and riding with the officers of the artillery regiment

stationed at Souvigny. The little milliners and grisettes of the province took the places of the little singers and little actresses of Paris, without causing them to be forgotten. By looking a little, one can find grisettes even in the provinces; and Paul did look a little.

As soon as the curé came up to Madame de Lavar-dens:

“I can,” said she, “tell you the names of the purchasers of Longueval, without waiting for M. de Larnac. I am perfectly at ease about it, and do not doubt the success of our combination. So that we should not get into a foolish quarrel, we, that is my neighbor M. de Larnac, M. Gallard, a prominent banker in Paris, and I, have made an agreement. M. de Larnac will have La Mionne; M. Gallard, the chateau and Blanche-Couronne; and I, La Rozeraié. I know, Monsieur le Curé, that you are anxious about your poor people. Take courage. These Gallards are very rich, and they will give you plenty of money.”

At this moment a carriage was seen approaching at a distance, in a cloud of dust.

“Here comes M. de Larnac,” cried Paul. “I know his ponies.”

All three came down the terrace in haste, and returned to the chateau. They reached it just as the carriage stopped in front of the steps.

“ Well ? ” asked Madame de Lavardens.

“ Well ! ” replied M. de Larnac, “ we have nothing.”

“ What ! nothing ? ” demanded Madame de Lavardens, very pale and very much agitated.

“ Nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing ; none of us.”

And M. de Larnac, jumping out of the carriage, related what had happened at the sale at Souvigny.

“ Everything,” said he, “ went off, at first, as if on wheels. The chateau was awarded to M. Gallard for six hundred thousand and fifty francs. No competitor. An overbid of fifty francs was enough. On the contrary, there was a little battle for Blanche-Couronne. The bids rose from five hundred thousand to five hundred and twenty thousand francs, which gave the victory to M. Gallard. A fresh battle, more bitterly disputed for La Rozeraiie ; it was finally awarded to you, madame, for four hundred and fifty-five thousand francs ; and I secured, without opposition, the forest of La Mionne with an overbid of a hundred francs. Everything seemed to be ended. People were beginning to stand up in the assemblage, and crowd around our lawyers to learn the names of the purchasers. However, M. Brazier, the judge who had charge of the sale, called for silence, and the bailiff offered for sale

the four lots together at two millions one hundred and fifty or sixty thousand francs, I do not know exactly which. A murmur of incredulity ran round the audience. On all sides you heard: 'No one, go on—there will be no one.' But little Gibert, the lawyer, who was sitting in the front row, and who, until then, had given no signs of life, rose, and said, calmly:

"I have a buyer for the four lots together at two millions two hundred thousand francs."

"This was a thunder-clap—a great clamor soon followed a dead silence. The hall was filled with the farmers and growers of the neighborhood. So much money for land—the idea threw them into a respectful stupor. However, M. Gallard nodded to Sandrier, the lawyer, who made his bids. The struggle began between Gibert and Sandrier. They reached two millions five hundred thousand francs. A short moment of hesitation on the part of M. Gallard. He decided. He continued up to three millions. There he stopped, and the estate was awarded to Gibert. Every one rushed for him, they surrounded him, they overwhelmed him. 'The name, the name of the buyer?'" "It is an American," replied Gibert. "Madame Scott."

"Madame Scott!" cried Paul de Lavardens.

“Do you know her?” demanded Madame de Lavardens.

“Do I know her? If only I did! Not at all. But I was at a ball at her house about six weeks ago.”

“At a ball at her house! and you do not know her—what sort of a woman is she, then?”

“Charming, exquisite, a dream, a marvel!”

“And there is a M. Scott?”

“Certainly; a tall, fair man. He was at his ball. He was pointed out to me. He bowed right and left at random. He did not enjoy himself, I assure you. He looked at us, and seemed to be saying to himself: ‘Who are all these people? What do they come to my house for?’ We went to see Madame Scott and Miss Percival, Madame Scott’s sister, and it was worth the trouble.”

“These Scotts,” said Madame de Lavardens, addressing M. de Larnac, “do you know anything about them?”

“Yes, madame. I know of them. M. Scott is an American, immensely rich, who established himself in Paris last year. As soon as I heard the name, I knew the victory had never been in doubt. Gallard was beaten in advance. The Scotts began by buying a house in Paris that cost two millions, besides the Park Monceau.”

“Yes; Rue Murillo,” said Paul. “I have just told you that I went to a ball at their house; it was——”

“Let M. de Larnac speak. You can tell us presently the history of your ball at Madame Scott’s.”

“Know then, that my Americans are established in Paris, and the shower of gold has commenced,” continued M. de Larnac. “True parvenus amuse themselves by foolishly throwing away money. This great fortune is quite new. It is said, that ten years ago Madame Scott was begging in the streets of New York.”

“She has begged?”

“So it is said, madame. Then she was married to this Scott, the son of a New York banker—and suddenly a successful law-suit put into their hands not millions, but tens of millions. They have, somewhere in America, a silver mine; an actual, a real mine, a silver mine, in which there is money. Oh! you will see what splendor will shine at Longueval. We will all look like poor people. It is claimed that they have a hundred thousand francs a day to spend.”

“Just think what neighbors!” cried Madame de Lavardens. “An adventuress! and still worse—a heretic, Monsieur l’Abbé, a Protestant!”

A heretic! a Protestant! Poor curé! that was his first thought when he heard the words: *an American*

Madame Scott. The new chatelaine would not go to mass! What did it matter to him if she had begged? What did it matter to him, her tens of millions and her tens and tens of millions? She was not a Catholic? He would no longer baptize the children born at Longueval, and the chapel of the chateau, where he so often had said mass, would be transformed into a Protestant oratory, in which would be heard the icy eloquence of some Calvinist or Lutheran minister.

In this group of amazed, disconsolate people, Paul de Lavardens looked radiant.

“A charming heretic at any rate,” said he, “and, indeed, if you please, two charming heretics. You ought to see the two sisters on horseback in the Bois, with two little grooms behind them, not higher than that.”

“Come, Paul, tell us what you know—this ball that you spoke of—how did you happen to go to a ball at these Americans?”

“By the mearest chance! My aunt Valentine received, that evening. I arrived about ten o’clock, for as you probably know there is no foolish gaiety at my aunt Valentines’ Wednesdays. I had been there about twenty minutes, when I saw Roger de Puymartin quietly slipping out. I followed him into the hall, and said to him, ‘Let us go in again together.’ ‘Oh, I am

not going oack.' 'Where are you going?' 'To a ball.' 'At whose house?' 'At the Scott's, do you want to come with me?' 'But I am not invited.' 'Nor am I, either.' 'What! nor you either?' 'No, I am going with a friend.' 'And does your friend know the Scott's?' 'Slightly, enough to introduce both of us. Come along, you will see Madame Scott.' 'Oh, I have seen her, riding in the Bois.' 'She is not *décolletée* on horseback; you have not seen her shoulders, and they are shoulders that are worth seeing. There is nothing finer in Paris at this moment.' And, *ma foi!* I went to the ball; I saw Madame Scott's auburn hair, and I saw Madame Scott's white shoulders, and I hope to see them again when there is a ball at Longueval."

"Paul!" said Madame de Lavardens, pointing to the abbé.

"Oh! Monsieur l' Abbé, I beg your pardon. Have I said anything? No, it seems to me—"

The poor priest had not heard him. His thoughts were elsewhere. Already he saw the preacher from the chateau stop at the door of each house in the village street, and slip under it little evangelical tracts.

Continuing his story, Paul entered upon an enthusiastic description of the house, which was a marvel—

“Of bad taste, and of glaring magnificence,” interrupted Madame de Lavardens.

“Not at all, mamma, not at all; nothing glaring, nothing loud—well chosen furniture—all the arrangements full of grace and originality—a conservatory flooded with electric lights, and the buffet placed in the conservatory under a *vinetrellis* loaded with grapes—in the month of April! One could gather all one wished. The favors for the German, it seems, cost forty thousand francs—jewels and the most costly *bonbonieres*, and they begged you to take them. I took nothing myself, but many people did not hesitate. That evening, Puymartin related to me Madame Scott’s history. But it was not exactly the same as M. de Larnac’s story. Roger told me that Madame Scott was carried off by a company of mountebanks when she was very small; and that her father found her riding in a traveling circus, jumping over the banners and flying through the paper hoops.

“A circus-rider?” cried Madame de Lavardens. “I prefer a beggar!”

“And while Roger was relating this romance to me I saw the foreign circus rider, come through a corridor, in a marvelous toilette of satin and lace; and I admired those shoulders, those dazzling shoulders, on which gleamed a necklace of diamonds as big as the stopper

of a decanter. You would have said, that the Minister of Finance had secretly sold Madame Scott half of the crown diamonds, and that this explained how it was that he had fifteen millions surplus in his accounts last month. Add to this, if you please, that she had a very thorough-bred air—the little mountebank—and that she was entirely at ease in all this splendor.”

Paul was so enthusiastic that his mother tried to stop him. In the presence of M. de Larnac, who was very much vexed, he allowed his satisfaction at having this wonderful American for a neighbor, to be too plainly seen.

The Abbé Constantin prepared to go back to Longueval, but Paul, seeing him about to start, said:

“Oh! no, no, Monsieur l’Abbé, you must not walk all the way to Longueval a second time in the heat. Let me drive you back. I am sorry to see you so troubled. I will try to divert you. Oh! in spite of your being such a saint, I make you laugh sometimes with my foolishness.”

Half an hour afterwards, both the curé and Paul were rolling along, side by side, toward the village. Paul talked, talked, talked! His mother was no longer there to quiet him, and keep him in check. His delight was brimming over.

“Now, you see, Monsieur l’Abbé, you are wrong in

taking things so seriously. There, look at my little mare, how she trots! how she steps out! You do not know her. Do you know what I paid for her? Four hundred francs. I discovered her, a fortnight ago, in the shafts of a gardener's cart. When she is in training once, she will make twelve miles an hour, and one has their hands full with her all the time. Look, look how she pulls! how she pulls! Go on! tot! tot! tot! You are not in a hurry are you, Monsieur l'Abbé? Will you drive through the woods? It will do you good to take the air. If you knew, Monsieur l'Abbé, how fond I am of you, and how much I respect you. I hope I have not said too many foolish things before you just now. I should be so sorry."

"No, my child, I have not heard anything."

"Then we will take the longest way round."

After turning to the left, into the forest, Paul went back to his first sentence:

"I tell you, Monsier l'Abbé, that you are wrong in taking things so seriously. Do you want me to tell you what I think? What has just happened is very fortunate."

"Very fortunate?"

"Yes, very fortunate. I would rather have the Scotts at Longueval, than the Gallards. Have you not just heard M. de Larnac criticise them for spend-

ing their money foolishly. It is never foolish to spend money. What is foolish is, to keep it. Your poor people, for I am very sure that it is especially of your poor people that you are thinking, well this has been a good day for your poor people. At least that is my opinion. Religion? Yes, religion. They will not go to mass. That will trouble you, it is quite natural; but they will send you money, plenty of money, and you will take it, and you will be perfectly right. You see you cannot say no. There will be a shower of gold all over the country. A stir! a commotion! coaches and four-powdered postillions, hunting, fireworks. And here, in this wood, in this very drive where we are, I shall, perhaps, before long, find Paris again. I may see again the two equestriennes, and the two little grooms that I told you about just now. If you knew how handsome they are on horseback—the two sisters. One morning, in Paris, I followed them the whole way around the Bois de Boulogne. I can see them yet. They wore high-crowned grey hats, little black veils, and two long riding habits, with just a single seam down the back; and a woman must be extremely well made, to wear such a riding habit as that! Because you see Monsieur l'Abbé, that with a habit cut like that, there is no deception possible."

The curé for some time had paid no attention to

Paul's discourse. They were driving through a long, strait avenue. At the farther end of it the curé saw a horseman coming, at a gallop.

“Look,” said he to Paul, “look! you have better eyes than I; is not that Jean, yonder?”

“Why, yes, it is Jean, I know his grey mare.” Paul was fond of horses, and he always looked at the horse, before he looked at the rider. It was, indeed, Jean; and perceiving the curé and Paul at a distance, he waved his cap which bore two gold bands.

Jean was a lieutenant in a regiment of artillery in garrison at Souvigny.

In a few minutes he rode up to the little carriage, and addressing the curé:

“I have just been at your house, godfather, and Pauline told me that you had gone to Souvigny to the sale. Well, who has bought the chateau?”

“An American, Madame Scott.”

“And Blanche Couronne?”

“The same Madame Scott.”

“And La Rozeraie?”

“Still, Madame Scott.”

“And the forest, always, Madame Scott?”

“You are right,” replied Paul, “and I know her—Madame Scott—and there will be entertainments at Longueval. I will introduce you. Only, Monsieur

l'Abbé, is troubled because she is an American, and a Protestant."

"Ah! that is true, my poor godfather. But we will talk about all that to-morrow. I am coming to dine with you. I have given Pauline notice. I have not time to stop now. I am on duty, and I must be at quarters at three o'clock. *Au revoir*, Paul! Till to-morrow, godfather!"

The lieutenant resumed his galop. Paul started up his little horse.

"What a good fellow Jean is," said Paul.

"Oh! yes."

"There is no one in the world better than Jean."

"No, no better."

The curé turned around to look after Jean, who was already disappearing in the depths of the forest.

"Oh! yes, there is you, Monsieur l'Abbé."

"No, not I, not I."

"Oh well, will you let me tell you, Monsieur l'Abbé, that there is no one in the world better than you two, you and Jean!"

"Now that is the truth! Oh wait, here is a good place to trot. I have been letting Niniche walk. I have named her Niniche."

Paul just touched Niniche with the tip of the whip, and as she started off at a rapid pace, he delighted cried:

“Just look how she lifts her feet, Monsieur l’Abbé, look now, how she lifts her feet! and so regular! “Just like a perfect machine! Lean over and see!”

The Abbé Constantin to please Paul leaned over a little to see *how Niniche lifted her feet*. But he was thinking of something else.

II.

THIS lieutenant's name was Jean Reynaud. He was the son of a country doctor, who was sleeping in the cemetery at Longueval. When the Abbé Constantin, in 1846, came to take possession of his parish, a Doctor Reynaud, the grandfather of Jean, was established in a cheerful little home on the Souvigny road, between the two chateaux of Longueval and Lavardens.

Marcel, the son of this Doctor Reynaud, had finished his medical studies at Paris. He was very industrious, and possessed of superior mental ability. He had received the first prize at the competition for fellowships. He decided to remain in Paris and try his fortune, and everything promised a prosperous and brilliant career for him, when, in 1852, he received the news of his father's death, from apoplexy. Marcel hastened to Longueval in the deepest grief. He worshipped his father. He spent a month with his

mother, and, at the end of that time, spoke of the necessity of returning to Paris.

“It is true,” said she to him, “you must go.”

“What! I go? We must go; do you think that I will leave you here all alone? I take you with me.”

“Go to live in Paris! Leave this place where I was born, where your father lived, where he died! I can never do it, my child, never! Go alone, since your life and all your future are there. I understand you. I know you will not forget me, that you will come often, very often to see me.”

“No, mother,” he replied, “I shall stay here.”

He stayed. His hopes, his ambitions, everything vanished, disappeared in a moment.

He saw but one thing—duty, which was, not to abandon his aged, suffering mother. In this duty, simply accepted, and simply performed, he found happiness. And, after all, there is little beside duty in which happiness is found.

Marcel adapted himself to his new life with a good grace, and with all his heart. He went on with his father's life, taking the furrow where his father had left it. He gave himself up entirely to the obscure profession of a country doctor, without regret and without looking back. He lived in the simplest manner possible, and one half of his time he gave to the

poor, from whom he would never take a penny. This was his only luxury.

A charming young girl, without fortune, and alone in the world, crossed his path. He married her. This happened in 1855, and the following year brought Doctor Reynaud a great grief and a great joy: the death of his aged mother, and the birth of his son Jean.

At an interval of six weeks, the Abbé Constantin recited the prayers for the dead over the tomb of the grandmother, and was present, as god-father, at the baptism of the grandson.

Meeting at the bedside of the suffering and dying, the priest and the physician, alike in heart and feeling, had been attracted and attached to each other. They felt themselves to be of the same family, the same race—the race of the tender, the just, the kind.

Years succeeded years, calm, tranquil, sweet, in the full satisfaction of labor and duty. Jean was growing up. He took his first lessons in writing of his father, and his first lessons in Latin of the curé.

Jean was industrious and intelligent; he made such progress that the two masters, especially the curé, found themselves somewhat perplexed after a few years. Their pupil became too advanced for them.

It was at this time, just after the death of her husband, that the countess came to permanently reside at Lavardens. She brought a tutor for her son Paul, who was a very attractive but a very idle little fellow. The two children were of the same age, they had known each other from childhood. Madame de Lavardens was very fond of Doctor Reynaud, and one day she made him this proposition :

“Send Jean to me every morning,” said she, “and I will send him back to you every evening. Paul’s tutor is a very intellectual young man, and he will make our two children study. You will do me a favor. Jean will set a good example to Paul.”

So it was arranged, and the little village-boy did, indeed, set the little gentleman excellent examples of industry and application ; but these excellent examples were not followed.

War broke out. . On the 4th of November, at seven o’clock in the morning, the troops, drafted at Souvigny, assembled on the village square ; their chaplain was the Abbé Constantin, their surgeon, Doctor Reynaud. The same thought came into the minds of both at the same time ; the priest was sixty-two years old, the physician fifty.

On setting out, the regiment took the road which goes through Longueval and passed in front of the

doctor's house. Madame Reynaud and Jean were waiting on the roadside. The child threw himself into his father's arms;

“Take me, papa, take me!”

Madame Reynaud wept. The doctor folded them both in a long embrace, and then went on his way.

A hundred feet farther on, the road takes an abrupt turn. The doctor turned around and cast a lingering look at his wife and child—the last. He was never to see them again.

On the 8th of January, 1871, the regiment from Souvigny attacked the village of Villersexel, occupied by the Prussians, who had fortified the walls, and were barricaded in the houses. The cannonading commenced. A soldier in the front ranks received a ball in his chest and fell. There was a moment of hesitation and confusion.

“Forward, forward!” cried the officers.

The men passed over the body of their comrade, and, under a hailstorm of balls, entered the town.

Doctor Reynaud and the Abbé Constantin marched with the troops. They halted when they reached the wounded man. Blood poured in floods from his mouth.

“I can do nothing,” said the doctor; “he is dying; he is for you.”

The priest knelt down beside the dying man; and the doctor, rising, went on toward the village. He had not taken ten steps, when he stopped, threw up both his arms, and fell to the ground. The priest ran to him. He was dead; killed by a ball through the temple.

That night the village was taken, and the next day the body of Doctor Reynaud was deposited in the cemetery at Villersexel. Two months afterward, the Abbé Constantin brought his friend's coffin to Longueval, and, following the coffin, as it was borne out of the church, walked an orphan. Jean had lost his mother, too. When the news of her husband's death came, she remained for twenty-four hours prostrated, crushed—without a word, without a tear. Then fever set in, then delirium, and then, at the end of a fortnight, death.

Jean was alone in the world. He was fourteen years old.

There remained of this family, in which, for a century, every one had been good and honest, only a child kneeling by a grave, who promised to be, what his grandfather and his father had been, honest and good. There are such families in France, and many, many more than one ventures to say. Our poor country is cruelly misrepresented, in many things,

by certain writers who draw startling, exaggerated pictures of it. It is true that the history of good people is often either monotonous or sorrowful. This story is a proof of it.

Jean's grief was the grief of a man. For a long time he was sad, for a long time silent. The evening after his father's burial, the Abbé Constantin took him home with him to the parsonage. The day had been rainy and cold. Jean was sitting by the fire, the priest was reading his breviary. Old Pauline went in and out. An hour passed in silence, when Jean, suddenly looking up, said :

“ Godfather, has my father left me any money ? ”

This was such a strange question, that the abbé, amazed, thought he could not have heard aright.

“ You ask me if your father—.”

“ I ask you, godfather, if my father left me any money ? ”

“ Yes, he must have left you money.”

“ A good deal, did he not ? I have often heard people say that my father was rich. Tell me, as nearly as you can, how much he must have left me.”

“ But I do not know. You ask me about things—”

The poor priest was distressed. Such a question at such a moment ! He believed that he knew Jean's

heart; and in that heart, there should be no place for such thoughts.

“I beg of you, godfather, tell me,” continued Jean gently. “I will explain to you, afterward, why I ask you this.”

“Ah! Well! Your father was said to have two or three hundred thousand francs.”

“And is that much money?”

“Yes, that is a large sum of money.”

“And all that money is mine?”

“Yes, all that money is yours.”

“Ah! So much the better; because on the day when my father was killed, over there, the Prussians on the very same day, killed the son of a poor woman at Longueval—mother Clement—you know her. They also killed Rosalie’s brother, with whom I used to play when I was little. Well, since I am rich, and they are poor, I want to divide the money my father has left me with mother Clement and Rosalie.”

On hearing these words, the curé rose, took Jean’s two hands, and drawing him close, folded him in his arms. The white head rested upon the blonde head. Two big tears broke from the old priest’s eyes, rolled slowly down his cheeks, and crept away into the wrinkles of his face.

The curé, however, was obliged to explain to Jean,

that, although he was the heir to his father's property, still, he could not dispose of it as he pleased. There must be a family council—a guardian.

“You, doubtless, godfather?”

“No, not I, my child; a priest has no right to hold a guardianship. I think, Monsieur Lenient, the notary at Souvigny, who was one of your father's best friends, will be chosen. You can talk with him—you can tell him what you wish to do.”

Monsieur Lenient was, indeed, selected by the family council to assume the duties of a guardian. Jean's entreaties were so urgent, and so touching, that the notary consented to deduct from the income the sum of twenty-four hundred francs, to be divided between Mother Clement and little Rosalie, every year until Jean was of age.

At this juncture, Madame Lavardens acted very generously. She went to see the Abbé Constantin.

“Give Jean to me,” said she, “give him entirely to me, until he has completed his studies. I will bring him back to you every year for his vacation. It is not a favor that I am doing you. It is a favor that I ask of you. I can desire nothing more fortunate for my son. Paul desires to enter St. Cyr, to become a soldier. I can find the necessary masters and appliances only in Paris. I will take the two children there;

they will be brought up together, under my eyes, like brothers. I will make no difference between them, I assure you."

It was difficult not to accept such a proposition. The old curé would have been glad to keep Jean with him, and the thought of the separation almost broke his heart; but what was for the child's interest? that was the only thing to be considered. The rest was nothing. Jean was called.

"My child," said Madame de Lavardens, "will you come and live with me and Paul, for a few years? I will take you to Paris."

"You are very kind, madame, but I would so much rather stay here."

He looked at the curé, who turned away.

"Why go away," he continued, "why take us away, Paul and me?"

Because you can finish your studies, steadily and profitably, only in Paris. Paul will prepare for his examination at St. Cyr. You know that he wants to be a soldier."

"And I, too, madame; I want to be a soldier."

"You a soldier?" said the curé, "but your father never thought of such a thing. Your father very often spoke of your future, your career, to me. You were to be a doctor, and like him a country doctor, at Lon-

gueval ; and like him help the poor, and like him take care of the sick. Jean, my child, remember—

“I remember ; I do remember.”

“Well, then, you must do as your father wished. It is your duty, Jean, it is your duty. You must go to Paris. You would like to stay here. Ah ! I can understand that ; and I, too, would like it very much, but it cannot be. You must go to Paris, to work, to work diligently. That does not trouble me. You are your father’s own son. You will be an honest man, and an industrious man. One is rarely the one without being the other. And some day, the poor will find in your father’s house, in the very place where he did so much good, another Doctor Reynaud who, too, will help them. And I, if I am still in this world, will be so happy when that day comes—so happy. But I ought not to speak of myself. It is wrong—I am of no importance. You must think of your father. I tell you again, Jean, it was his dearest wish. You cannot have forgotten it.”

“No, I have not forgotten it ; but if my father sees me and hears me, I am sure he understands me, and forgives me, for it is on his account.”

“On his account !”

“Yes ; when I heard that he was dead, and when I knew how he died, in a moment, without being obliged

to reflect, I said to myself that I would be a soldier; and I will be a soldier. Godfather, and you, madame; I entreat you not to prevent me.”

The child burst into tears, in an agony of despair. The countess and the abbé quieted him with kind words.

“Yes—yes—it is understood. Everything shall be as you wish; everything that you wish.”

They both had the same idea. “Let us leave it to time. Jean is only a child; he will change his mind.” In which they both were mistaken. Jean did not change his mind.

In the month of September, 1876, Paul was rejected at St. Cyr; and Jean stood eleventh at the School of Polytechnics. On the day, when the list of successful candidates was published, he wrote to the Abbé Constantin:

“I have passed, and passed too well; for I want to go into the army, and not into the civil service. However, if I keep my rank at the school, it will be good for one of my comrades. He will get my place.”

But Jean did better than keep his rank. The final classification made him number seven. But instead of entering the School of Engineers, he entered the School of Practice at Fontainebleau in 1878. He was just twenty-one. He was of age; master of his own

fortune, and the first act of his administration was a large, a very large, expenditure. He bought for Mother Clement and for little Rosalie, now grown up, two annuities of fifteen hundred francs each. They cost him seventy thousand francs, nearly the same amount which Paul spent in the first year of his majority on Mademoiselle Lise Bruyère, of the Palais-Royal Theatre.

Two years later, Jean carried off the first prize at Fontainebleau, which gave him his choice of vacant places. There was one in the regiment stationed at Souvigny, and Souvigny was very near Longueval; Jean asked for the place and obtained it.

This is the way that Jean Reynaud, lieutenant in the 9th Regiment of Artillery, came, in the month of October, 1880, into possession of Dr. Marcel Reynaud's house. This is the way he found himself again in the country where his childhood was spent, and where every one had preserved the memory of his father's life and death. This is the way that the Abbé Constantin was not denied the happiness of seeing his friend's son again. And, if the truth must be told, he no longer regretted that Jean had not been a physician. When the old curé went out of church, after saying Mass, if he saw a cloud of dust blow along the road, if he felt the earth tremble with the roaring

of cannon, he stopped and took as much pleasure as a child in seeing the regiment pass.

But the regiment, for him, was Jean! In the features of this sturdy, robust officer, he could plainly read integrity, courage and goodness.

As soon as Jean saw the curé at a distance, he would put his horse on a gallop, and stop to talk a little with his godfather. Jean's horse always turned his head around to the curé, for he well knew that there was always a lump of sugar for him in the pocket of the old soutane—worn and pieced—his morning soutane. The abbé had a handsome one which he saved to go into company—when he went into company.

When the trumpets of the regiment sounded through the village, every eye was watching for Jean, little Jean. For to the old people of Longueval, he was still little Jean. One old peasant, wrinkled and decrepit, could never break himself of the habit of saluting him as he passed, with a "Good-morning, boy!" The boy was six feet tall.

And Jean never went through the village without seeing at two windows, the old parchment face of Mother Clement, and Rosalie's smiling features.

The latter had been married the year before. Jean was her witness, and danced merrily the evening of the wedding with the young girls of Longueval.

This was the lieutenant who, on Saturday the 28th of May, 1881, at about five o'clock in the afternoon, dismounted in front of the parsonage gate. He entered; his horse quietly followed him, and made his own way toward a little shed in the yard. Pauline stood at the kitchen window. Jean went up and kissed her on both cheeks.

“Good day, my good Pauline. How do you do!”

“Very well. I am busy with your dinner. Do you want to know what you are going to have? Potato soup, a leg of mutton, and a dish of eggs, *au lait*.”

“Excellent! I like it all; and I am starving.”

“And I forgot to mention a salad, which you can help me pick presently. Dinner will be ready at half-past six exactly; because to-night, at half-past seven, Monsieur le Curé has his service for the month of Mary.”

“Where is my godfather?”

“In the garden; Monsieur le Curé is very sad on account of the sale yesterday.”

“Yes; I know, I know.”

“It will cheer him up a little to see you. He is always so happy when you are here. Take care, Loulou wants to nibble the rose-bushes. How warm he is, poor Loulou!”

“I came by the longest way, through the wood, and I rode pretty fast.”

Jean caught Loulou, who was going toward the rose-trellis, took off his saddle and bridle, fastened him in the little shed, and rubbed him down with a bit of straw in a twinkling.

Then he went into the house, took off his sword and his cap, put on an old five-cent straw hat, and started for the garden to find the curé.

The poor abbé was, indeed, very sad. He had not closed his eyes all night; he who usually slept so peacefully, so sweetly, the untroubled sleep of a child. His heart was heavy. Longueval in the hands of a foreigner, of a heretic, of an adventurer! Jean repeated what Paul had said the day before:

“You will have money, plenty of money for your poor.”

“Money! money! Yes, my poor will lose nothing—perhaps they will gain. But I must go to ask for this money, and I shall find in the salôn, instead of my dear old friend, this American with red hair—it seems that she has red hair. I shall certainly go for my poor people, I shall go; and she will give me money, but she will give me nothing else. The marchioness gave in a different way. Her heart and soul were in the giving. We went together, every

week, to visit the poor and the sick. She knew all their sufferings, and all their miseries. And when I was confined to my arm chair with the gout, she made the rounds, all alone ; and as well, or better than I."

Here, Pauline interrupted the conversation. She carried an immense, china salad bowl, decorated in big, staring, red flowers.

"Here I am," said she, "I am going to pick the salad. Jean, do you want lettuce or young chiccory?"

"Chiccory," replied Jean gayly, "it is a long time since I have eaten young chiccory."

"Well! you shall have some to-night. Here, take the salad bowl."

Pauline began to cut the chiccory, and Jean stooped down to receive the leaves into the big salad bowl. The curé looked on.

At this moment, a tinkling as of little bells was heard. A carriage was approaching and the old iron work rattled. The abbé's little garden was separated from the road only by a low hedge, breast-high, with a little open gate in the middle of it.

All three looked up and saw an old fashioned livery carriage coming, drawn by two big white horses, and driven by an old coachman in a blouse. By the side of the coachman sat a servant in the severest and most perfect of liveries.

Inside the carriage were two young women, both in traveling dress, very elegant, but very simple.

When the carriage reached the garden hedge, the driver stopped his horses, and addressing the abbé :

“Monsieur le Curé,” said he, “here are some ladies who want to see you.”

Then turning to his passengers, he added :

“This is Monsieur le Curé, of Longueval.”

The Abbé Constantin, had approached and opened the little gate. The travelers alighted. Their attention was immediately drawn, not without some surprise, to the young officer, who to his great embarrassment, stood with his straw hat in one hand and in the other a big salad bowl heaped up with chiccory.

The two ladies entered the garden, and the elder—she seemed to be about twenty-five—said with a slightly foreign accent, quite unusual and peculiar :

“I must introduce myself, Monsieur le Curé, Madame Scott. I am the Madame Scott who bought the chateau, yesterday, and the farms and all the rest. I hope I do not disturb you, and that you can spare me a few minutes.”

Then pointing to her traveling companion :

“Miss Bettina Percival—my sister—you have surmised it already, I think. We are so alike, are

we not? Ah! Bettina we have left our little bags in the carriage, and we want them.”

“I will go and get them.” And as Miss Percival started for the two bags, Jean said:

“Allow me, mademoiselle, I beg of you.”

“I am very sorry, Monsieur, to give you so much trouble. The servant will hand them to you—they are under the front seat.”

She had the same accent as her sister, the same large black eyes, laughing and bright, and the same hair—not red—but blonde with golden lights, where the sunlight played softly through it. She bowed to Jean, with a pretty smile, and he, giving the bowl of chiccory to Pauline, went to get the little bags.

Meanwhile, the Abbé Constantin, very much agitated and embarrassed, was conducting the new chatelaine of Longueval into the parsonage.

III.

The parsonage of Longueval was not a palace. The same room on the ground floor, served for a salôn, and for a dining-room, communicating directly with the kitchen by a door, that was always wide open; this room was provided with the scantiest amount of furniture: two old arm chairs, six straw chairs, a side-board, and a round table. Pauline had already laid the cloth for two, the Abbé and Jean.

Mrs. Scott and Miss Percival went in and out, examining the curé's residence with a sort of childish curiosity.

"The garden, the house, everything is charming," said Mrs. Scott.

Together they boldly entered the kitchen. The Abbé Constantin followed them, astonished, stupified, horrified at this abrupt and unexpected American invasion.

Old Pauline looked at the two foreigners with a disturbed and sullen air.

“Look at them,” she said to herself, “these heretics, these hateful people.”

And with trembling hands she went on mechanically picking over her salad.

“I congratulate you,” said Bettina to her, “your little kitchen is so well kept! Look, Suzie, is it not just your idea of a parsonage?”

“And the curé, too,” said Mrs. Scott, “Ah! yes, Monsieur le Curé, wont you let me tell you so? If you knew how glad I am that you are just what you are! What did I tell you on the train this morning, Bettina? and just now again in the carriage?”

“My sister said, Monsieur le Curé, that what she desired most of all was a curé, not young, not gloomy, not severe—a curé with white hair, and a kind and pleasant disposition.

“And you are just exactly that, Monsieur le Curé—exactly. No, we could not be better pleased. Excuse me, I beg of you, for speaking so to you. Parisians know how to turn their phrases in a skilful, delicate manner. As for me, I do not know how, and I would have great difficulty in keeping out of trouble, in speaking French, if I did not say things simply, foolishly, just as they come. In short, I am pleased, very much pleased; and I hope you are too, Monsieur le Curé, that you are pleased, very

much pleased, with your new parishioners.”

“My parishioners!” said the curé, finding speech, motion, life, everything which, for a few minutes had completely deserted him. “My parishioners! Pardon me, madame, mademoiselle—I am so overcome! You could be—you are Catholics?”

“Why, yes, we are Catholics.”

“Catholics! Catholics!” repeated the curé.

“Catholics! Catholics!” cried old Pauline, who appeared, beaming, radiant, her hands uplifted, in the doorway of the kitchen.

Mrs. Scott looked at the curé, and looked at Pauline, very much astonished to have produced such an effect with a single word. And, to complete the picture, Jean appeared, carrying the two little traveling bags. The curé and Pauline greeted him in the same words:

“Catholics! Catholics!”

“Ah! I understand,” said Mrs. Scott, laughing, “it is our name, our country! You thought we were Protestants. -Not at all; our mother was a Canadian, of French and Catholic origin. That is the way that my sister and I come to speak French, with an accent, it is true, and with a certain American manner; but at least so that we can say almost everything that we want to say. My husband is a Protestant, but he

leaves me perfect liberty ; and my two children are Catholics. This is why, Monsieur l'Abbé, we have wanted, from the first day, to come to see you."

"For that," continued Bettina, "and for something else ; but for this something else, we must have our little bags."

"Here they are, mademoiselle," said Jean.

"This one is mine."

"And this is mine."

While the little bags were passing from the officer's hands to the hands of Mrs. Scott and Bettina, the curé presented Jean to the two Americans ; but he was still in such a state of emotion, that the presentation was not entirely according to rule. The curé forgot only one thing, but a very essential thing in an introduction, Jean's surname.

"This is Jean, my godson," said he, "lieutenant in the artillery regiment, stationed at Souvigny. He is one of the family."

Jean made two immense bows ; the Americans, two little ones ; after which they began to look into their bags, and each took out a roll of a thousand francs, daintly inclosed in green leather boxes hooped with gold.

"I have brought you this for your poor people, Monsieur le Curé," said Mrs. Scott.

“And I, this,” said Bettina. They slipped their offerings delicately into the right hand and into the left hand of the old curé, and he, looking first at his right hand and then at his left, said to himself:

“What are these two little things. They are very heavy. There must be gold in them. Yes; but how much? how much?”

*Inc. translation
72 is right.*

The Abbé Constantin was sixty-two years old, and a good deal of money had passed through his hands—not to stay long, it is true; but that money had come to him in little sums, and the idea of such a present had never entered his head. Two thousand francs! He had never had two thousand francs in his possession, never even a thousand.

Then, not knowing what they had given him, the curé did not know how to thank them.

“I am very grateful to you, madame; you are very good, mademoiselle,” he faltered.

After all, he did not thank them enough. Jean thought it was time to interfere.

“Godfather, these ladies have just given you two thousand francs.”

Then, overcome with emotion and gratitude, the curé cried:

“Two thousand francs! Two thousand francs for my poor!”

Pauline suddenly made a fresh appearance.

“Two thousand francs! Two thousand francs!”

“So it appears,” said the curé, “so it appears. Here, Pauline, lock up this money, and take care of it.”

Old Pauline was servant, cook, apothecary, treasurer—in short, all sorts of things at the parsonage.

With trembling hands she respectfully received the two little rolls of gold pieces, which represented so much suffering relieved, so many sorrows softened.

“That is not all,” said Mrs. Scott. “I will give you five hundred francs every month.”

“And I will give the same as my sister.”

“A thousand francs a month! But there will no longer be any poor.”

“That is just what we want. I am rich, very rich—and my sister, too! She is even richer than I; because a young girl does not have so many expenses, while I— Ah! I!— I spend all I can, all that I can. When one has a good deal of money, too much money; if one has really more than is right; say, Monsieur l’Curé, is there any other way to get pardon for such a sin, than to have open hands and give, give, give as much as possible, and as well as possible? Besides, you are going to give me something.”

And, addressing Pauline, “Will you be so good as

to give me a glass of water ? No, nothing else—just a glass of water. I am dying of thirst.”

“And I,” said Bettina, laughing, while Pauline ran to bring a glass of water, “I am dying of something else. I am dying with hunger. Monsieur le Curé, I know it is awfully impolite, but I see that your table is laid. Couldn’t you ask us to dinner ?”

“Bettina !” said Mrs. Scott.

“Be still, Suzie, be still. You want us, do you not, Monsieur le Curé.

The old curé could not reply. He no longer knew anything—even where he was. They took his parsonage by assault. They were Catholics ! They had brought him two thousand francs ! They promised him a thousand francs a month ! And they wanted to dine with him ! That was the climax. He was dismayed at the idea of doing the honors—of his leg of mutton and his dish of eggs, *au lait*—to these two rich Americans, who were accustomed to be served with the daintiest, rarest, most extraordinary dishes. He murmured :

“To dine ! to dine ! You would dine here ?”

Jean was obliged to interfere a second time :

“My godfather will be only too happy,” said he, “if you will consent ; I see what troubles him. We expected to dine alone, the two of us ; and so you must

not expect a banquet, ladies. You will make allowances."

"Yes, yes; all allowances," said Bettina.

Then, addressing her sister:

"Now, Suzie, do not frown at me because I have been a little . . . you know that I am always a little . . . Let us stay, will you? It will rest us so much to spend an hour here quietly. We have had such a tiresome day on the railway, in the carriage, in the dust, in the heat! We had such a frightful breakfast this morning in such a frightful hotel. We would have to go back to that same hotel to dine at half-past seven, so that we could take the train back to Paris. It will be much nicer to dine here. You won't say no? Ah! dear Suzie, you are so good."

She kissed her sister, so coaxingly, so tenderly, then turning to the curé:

"If you only knew, Monsieur le Curé, how good she is."

"Bettina! Bettina!"

"Come," said Jean, "hurry, Pauline! Two more plates. I will help you."

"And I, too," cried Bettina, "I, too. I am going to help you. Let me, I beg of you, it will please me so much. Only, Monsieur le Curé, you must let me make myself at home a little."

So she took off, first, her traveling cloak ; and Jean could not help admiring her lithe and graceful figure, wonderful in its exquisite perfection.

Miss Percival then took off her hat, but with a little too much haste, for it was a signal for a charming inundation. A whole avalanche escaped, and poured in torrents, in long cascades, over Bettina's shoulders ; she was standing in front of a window through which the sunlight entered in floods ; and this golden light, shining full on her beautiful golden hair, made an exquisite frame for the young girl's radiant beauty.

Confused and blushing, Bettina called her sister to her aid ; and Mrs. Scott had no little trouble in bringing order out of this delightful disorder.

When the accident was at length repaired, nothing could prevent Bettina seizing the plates, and the knives and forks.

“ Why, monsieur,” said she to Jean, “ I know perfectly well how to set the table. Ask my sister. Say, Suzie, when I was a little girl in New York, didn't I know how to set the table ? ”

“ Yes ; very well,” replied Mrs. Scott.

And she, too, while she begged the curé to excuse Bettina's thoughtlessness, took off her hat and cloak ; and Jean, for the second time, had the delightful vision of a charming figure and wonderful hair.

But the accident did not occur a second time, much to Jean's regret.

A few minutes later, Mrs. Scott, Miss Percival, the curé and Jean, sat down to the little parsonage table; and then, through their unexpected and extraordinary meeting—above all, through Bettina's good humor and sprightliness—the conversation very soon became entirely unconstrained and informal.

“You will see, Monsieur le Curé, you will see if I have told you a story—if I am not starving. I warn you that I am ravenous. I was never more pleased to sit down at a table. This dinner makes a pleasant finish to a happy day. We are delighted, my sister and I, to own this chateau, these farms and this forest.”

“And to have it in such an extraordinary fashion. It was so unlooked for—so little expected!” said Mrs. Scott.”

“You might well say we did not expect it at all, Suzie. Do you know, Monsieur l'Abbé, that yesterday was my sister's birthday . . . But, pardon, monsieur . . . Monsieur Jean is it not?”

“Yes, mademoiselle, Monsieur Jean.”

“Then, Monsieur Jean, will you give me a little more of that excellent soup, if you please?”

The Abbé Constantin began to feel better, and re-

cover himself; but he was still too much affected to discharge his duties as host quiet correctly; and it was Jean who managed his godfather's modest dinner. So he filled the plate of the charming American, who looked at him with a pair of large, dark eyes, in which shone artlessness, fearlessness and vivacity. Jean's eyes paid her back in the same coin.

Not three-quarters of an hour before, the young American and the young officer spoke to each other, in the curé's garden, for the first time; and already they were completely at ease with each other—on confidential, almost intimate terms.

“ I told you already, Monsieur le Curé, that yesterday was my sister's birthday. A week ago my brother-in-law was obliged to go to America. Just as he was starting, he said to my sister: ‘ I shall not be here on your birthday, but you will hear from me.’ So, yesterday there came presents and bouquets from all directions; but up to five o'clock nothing from my brother-in-law—nothing. We went out to the Bois on horse-back and—*à propos* of horses——”

She stopped short, and looked down inquiringly at Jean's dusty boots, then she cried:

“ Why, Monsieur, you wear spurs ? ”

“ Yes, mademoiselle.”

“ You are in the cavalry ? ”

“ I am in the artillery, mademoiselle, and the artillery is cavalry.”

“ And your regiment is stationed here ? ”

“ Very near here.”

“ Why, then you will ride with us ? ”

“ With the greatest pleasure, mademoiselle.”

“ That is all. Let me see, where was I ? ”

“ You do not know, Bettina, where you are ; and you are telling these gentlemen all sorts of things which cannot interest them.”

“ Oh ! I beg your pardon, madame,” said the curé. “ The sale of the chateau is the great question of this province, just now—and mademoiselle’s story interests us very much.”

“ There, Suzie, you see my story interests Monsieur le Curé very much. Now I will go on. We went out for a ride, we came back at seven o’clock—nothing. We went to dinner, and just as we rose from the table, a despatch from America arrived—only two lines: ‘ I have, to-day, bought for you, in your own name, the chateau and domain of Longueval, near Souvigny, on the Northern Road.’ Then we began to laugh, like two children, at the idea.”

“ No, no Bettina, that is not quite true. You do us both injustice. Our first emotion was one of gratitude. We are fond of the country, my sister and I.

My husband, who is very indulgent, knew that we were anxious to have a country seat in France. He has been looking for six months, but could find nothing. At last, without telling us, he discovered this chateau, which was to be sold on my birth-day. It was a generous and delicate attention."

"Yes, Suzie, you are right; but after the first outburst of gratitude, there was a great outburst of laughter."

"That, I acknowledge. When we reflected that we suddenly found ourselves—for what belongs to one, belongs to the other—proprietors of a chateau, without knowing, where it was, or what it was like, or how much it cost—why, it seemed like a fairy story." For five good minutes we laughed heartily. Then we took a map of France, and succeeded, not without some difficulty, in unearthing Souvigny. After the map, it was the Railroad Guide's turn, and this morning, at ten o'clock, we took the express train for Souvigny.

"We have spent the whole day in visiting the chateau, the stables, the farms. We have not seen everything, for it was so immense; but we are delighted with everything that we have seen. Only, Monsieur le Curé, there is one thing which perplexed me. I know that the estate was publicly sold yesterday—I saw the

large placards, all along the road. But I did not dare ask any one of the farmers or keepers who accompanied us on our rounds—my ignorance would have looked so foolish!—how much it all cost. My husband forgot to tell me, in his dispatch. It is only a little thing, in the delights of ownership, but I would not be sorry to know. Tell me, Monsieur le Curé, tell me, if you know—the price of it.”

“An enormous price,” replied the curé.

“An enormous price! You frighten me. How much exactly?”

“Three millions!”

“Only three millions!” cried Mrs. Scott; “the farms, the forests, and all for three millions?”

“Yes, three millions.”

“Why, that is nothing,” said Bettina. “That charming little river, going through the park is, alone, worth three millions.”

“And you said, just now, Monsieur le Curé, you said there were many persons who bid against us for the lands and the chateau?”

“Yes, madame.”

“And was my name mentioned before these people, after the sale?”

“Yes, madame.”

“And when my name was mentioned, was there any

one who knew me, who spoke of me? Yes—yes—Your silence answers me—they did speak of me. Ah! well, I am serious now, Monsieur le Curé, very serious. I beg of you, as a favor, tell me what they said about me.”

“Why, madame,” replied the poor curé, who was on hot coals, “they spoke of your large fortune.”

“Yes, they must have spoken of that; no doubt they said I was very rich, and very recently a *parvenue*, did they not? Very well; but that was not all, they must have said something else.”

“No, I did not hear anything.”

“Oh! Monsieur le Curé, you are telling what you call a pious story. I distress you, for you are truth itself. But if I thus torment you, it is because I have a great interest in knowing what was said.”

“Mon dieu! madame,” interrupted Jean, “You are right, they did say something else, only my godfather is a little embarrassed in telling you; but, since you insist, they said that you were one of the most elegant, most brilliant, most——.”

“One of the prettiest women in Paris? They might say that, as a little compliment, one could say it; but that was not all. There was something else.”

“Ah! for instance——”

“Yes; there was something else, and I would like

to have a frank, plain explanation with you now. I do not know—but I think this is one of my lucky days; it may be too soon to say it, perhaps, but it seems to me that both of you are, in some degree, my friends. Well, then, tell me, if false, absurd stories are told about me; am I not right in thinking that you will help me to contradict them?”

“Yes, madame,” replied Jean with eagerness, “you are right in thinking so.”

“Then it is to you, monsieur, that I address myself. You are a soldier. It belongs to your profession to have courage. Promise me to be brave. Do you promise me?”

“What do you understand, madame, by being brave?”

“Promise—promise without explanations or conditions.”

“Well, then, I promise.”

“You will answer, then, frankly, yes or no, to the questions that I am going to ask you.”

“I will answer.”

“Did they tell you that I had begged in the streets of New York?”

“Yes, madame, they told me so.”

“And that I had been a rider in a traveling circus?”

“They told me that, madame.”

“I thought it! Well, you have heard the worst! But I would observe, in the first place, that there is nothing discreditable in all that. But if it is not true, have I not the right to say that it is not true? And it is not true. I will tell you my history in a few words; and if I tell it to you—on the very first day—it is that you will have the goodness to repeat it to all those who speak of me to you. I am going to spend a part of my life in this country, and I desire to have it known where I come from, and what I am. Poor! that I have been—very poor. It was eight years ago. My father had just died—very soon after the death of our mother. I was eighteen years old, and Bettina nine. We were alone in the world, with heavy debts and a great lawsuit. My father’s last words were: ‘Suzie, never compromise the lawsuit, never, never. You will have millions, my children, millions!’ He kissed us both. Then his mind wandered, and he died, repeating: ‘Millions!’ The next day an agent presented himself, who offered to pay all our debts and give me ten thousand dollars, if I would sell my interest in the lawsuit. It concerned the possession of a large tract of land in Colorado. I refused. Then it was, that for several months, we were very poor.”

“And it was then,” said Bettina, “that I used to set the table.”

“I spent all my time in the offices of New York lawyers; but none of them would take charge of my interests. Everywhere the same response: ‘Your case is very doubtful; your opponents are very rich and formidable, money is needed; money to carry on the suit, and you have none. You have had an offer of ten thousand dollars, besides having all your debts paid, accept it, sell your suit.’ But I could always hear my father’s last words, and I would not consent. Poverty might, however, have soon constrained me, when, one day, I solicited an interview with one of my father’s friends, Mr. William Scott, a banker in New York. He was not alone; a young man was sitting in his office near his desk. ‘You can talk freely,’ said he, ‘this is my son, Richard Scott. I looked at the young man, and he looked at me, and then we recognized each other. ‘Suzie!’ ‘Richard!’ He held out his hand to me. He was twenty-three and I was eighteen, as I have told you. We had played together very often when we were children. Then we were great friends. Seven or eight years before, he went to finish his education in France and in England. His father made me sit down, and asked me what brought me to him. I told him. He listened and replied, ‘You will need twenty or thirty thousand dollars. No one will lend you such a sum on the uncertain

chances of a complicated lawsuit. It would be folly. If you are in need, if you want assistance——’ ‘That is not what Miss Percival asks,’ said Richard, warmly. ‘I know it; but what she asks of me is impossible.’ He rose to wait upon me to the door. Then I broke down for the first time since my father’s death. I had been strong until then, but I felt my courage exhausted. I could bear no more, and I burst into tears. At length I recovered myself and went away. An hour afterward, Richard Scott came to see me. ‘Suzie,’ said he, ‘promise to accept what I am going to offer you; promise me.’ I promised him. ‘Well,’ said he, ‘I will put the necessary sum at your disposal, on the single condition that my father shall know nothing of it.’ ‘But you must know about my claim, so that you will understand what it is, what it is worth.’ ‘I do not know the first word about your claim, and I do not wish to know. Where would be the merit of assisting you, if I were sure of getting my money back? Besides, you have promised to accept it. It is done. There is no going back.’ It was offered to me with such simplicity, such openness of heart, that I accepted. Three months afterward, we gained our cause. The property became indisputably ours, and we were offered five millions for it. I went to consult Richard. ‘Refuse and wait,’ said he, ‘if they offer you such a sum,

it is because the land is worth double.' 'But I must pay you back your money. I owe you a great sum of money.' 'Oh! that will do later, there is no haste; I am doing well for the present, my credit is in no danger.' 'But I want to pay you immediately; I have such a horror of debt! Perhaps there will be a way without selling the property. Richard, will you be my husband?' 'Yes, Monsieur le Curé; yes, monsieur,' said Mrs. Scott, laughing, "It was I who threw myself like that at my husband's head. It was I who asked for his hand. That you can tell to all the world, and you will only tell the truth. Besides, I was obliged to make this offer. Never, oh! I am as sure of it as I am of my life, he would never have spoken. I had become too rich. And, as he loved me, and not my money, my money frightened him a little. That is the history of my marriage. As to the history of our fortune, that can be told in a few words. There was, indeed, millions in these tracts of land in Colorado; they were found to contain very rich silver mines, and from these mines we receive every year a fabulous income.

"But we are all agreed, my husband, my sister and I, to give a large share of this income to the poor; you see, Monsieur le Curé, it is because we have known such bitter days. Bettina can remember when she

was our little housekeeper in that fifth story room, in New York. It is for that reason, you will always find us ready to help those who, as we have been, are struggling amidst the misfortunes and hardships of life. And now, Monsieur Jean, will you pardon this long discourse, and give me a little of that tempting cream?"

The cream was Pauline's composition of eggs and milk—and while Jean hastened to serve Madame Scott, she continued:

"I have not yet told you all. You must know how these extravagant stories were started. When we first came to Paris, a year ago, we felt it our duty to give a certain sum of money to the poor. Who told of it? Not we, certainly; but the fact was published in one of the newspapers, with the amount. Directly two young reporters came running to Mr. Scott to ask him a whole catalogue of questions about his past. They wanted to write about us in the papers—a . . . how do you say that?—a sketch of our lives. Mr. Scott is sometimes a little hasty. He was that day; and he dismissed these gentlemen, very abruptly, without telling them anything. Then, not knowing our true history, they invented an imaginary one. The first one said, that I had begged in the snow, in New York; and the second, the next day, to make his

article still more sensational, made me jump through the paper balloons in a circus at Philadelphia. You have some very droll journals in France, and we also—in America.”

Now, for the last five minutes Pauline had been making the most frantic signals to the curé, who so completely failed to understand them, that at last the poor woman, summoned all her courage :

“Monsieur le curé, it is a quarter after seven.”

“A quarter after seven! Oh! ladies, I beg you to excuse me. I have a service this evening; it is the month of Mary.”

“The month of Mary—and is the service to be soon?”

“Yes, immediately.”

“And at exactly what time is our train to Paris?”

“At half past nine,” replied Jean, “and you need only fifteen or twenty minutes to reach the station.”

“Then Suzie, we could go to church.”

“We will go to church,” replied Madame Scott, “but before we part, Monsieur le Curé, I have a favor to ask of you. I want to have you dine with me, without fail, the first time that I dine at my new home at Longueval, and you, too, Monsieur—all alone, just we four, like to-day. Oh! do not refuse; the invitation is heartily given.”

“ And heartily accepted, madame,” replied Jean.

“ I will write to let you know the day. I will come as soon as possible. You call that *hanging the crane* do you not? Well! we will *hang the crane*, we four.”

Pauline had carried Miss Percival off into a corner of the room, and was talking very earnestly. Their conversation ended with these words :

“ You will be there ? ” said Bettina.

“ Yes, I will be there.”

“ And you will tell me just the right moment ? ”

“ I will tell you, but take care, here comes Monsieur le Curé, and he must not suspect anything.”

The two sisters, the curé and Jean came out of the house. They went through the cemetery to the church. The evening was delightful. Slowly and silently all four walked through the little pathway, in the last rays of the setting sun. They approached the monument at Doctor Reynaud's grave, which, though simple, was, by its proportions, conspicuous among the other tomb-stones. Mrs. Scott and Bettina stopped, their attention drawn by this inscription which it bore :

“HERE LIES THE BODY OF
“DOCTOR MARCEL REYNAUD,”

“Surgeon-Major of the regiment drafted at Souvigny,
killed on the 8th of January, 1871, at the battle of
Villersexel.”

“PRAY FOR HIM.”

When they had finished reading it, the curé, pointing to Jean, said simply .

“It was his father !”

The two women drew near the tombstone and stood with bowed heads for a few moments, affected, pensive, in meditation. Then, turning around, they both at the same moment held out their hand to the young officer and went on towards the church. Jean’s father had had their first prayer at Longueval.

The curé went to put on his surplice and stole—Jean conducted Mrs. Scott to the pew, which for two centuries had been reserved for the owners of Longueval.

Pauline had preceded them. She was waiting for Miss Percival, in the shadow of a column in the church. She led Bettina up the steep narrow staircase, into the gallery and seated her at the harmonium.

The old curé came out of the sacristy, preceded by two choristers, and just as he knelt down on the steps of the altar :

“This is the moment, mademoiselle,” said Pauline

whose heart was beating with eagerness, "Poor dear man, how happy he will be!"

When he heard the organ's strain rise softly, like a murmur on the air, and swelling, fill the little church, the Abbé Constantin was touched, with such tender emotion that the tears came to his eyes. It was the first time he had wept, since that day when Jean told him that he wanted to share all that he had with the mothers and sisters of those who fell at his father's side, under the German bullets.

That tears might come again to the old priest's eyes, it was necessary that a little American girl, should cross the sea, and come to play one of Chopin's Reveries in the church at Longueval.

IV.

The next morning at half-past five, the bugle sounded through the quarters. Jean mounted, and took command of his section.

At the end of May all the recruits in the army are trained, and ready to take part in the general drill. Almost every day they execute different manœuvres with the field batteries.

Jean loved his profession; he was accustomed to superintend with the greatest care the caparison and harness of the horses, and the equipment, and bearing of his men; but this morning he gave very little attention to these small details of the service.

A problem troubled him, perplexed him, left him undecided, and this problem was one of those whose solution is not given in the Polytechnic School. Jean could not find the exact answer to this question :

“ Which of the two is the prettier ? ”

On drill, during the first part of the manœuvres each battery works independently, under the captain's

orders—but he often puts one of his lieutenants in his place, so that he may be accustomed to the command of six pieces. That very morning it so happened, that from the beginning of the manœuvre, the command was given to Jean. To the captain's great surprise, who considered his first lieutenant a very well-trained, competent, skilful officer, everything went wrong. Jean ordered two or three false movements—and neither keeping up nor correcting the distances, the horses several times came in contact. The captain was obliged to interfere. He gave Jean a slight reprimand which ended in these words :

“I cannot understand it. What is the matter with you this morning ? It is the first time this ever happened.”

And it was also the first time that Jean ever saw on parade, anything besides guns and drums, anything besides soldiers and leaders. In the clouds of dust raised by the carriage wheels and the horses' feet, Jean saw, not the second mounted battery of the 9th Artillery, but the distinct image of two Americans with dark eyes under golden hair. And at the very moment when he was receiving the merited rebuke of his captain, Jean was saying to himself :

“Madame Scott is the prettier.”

The drill is divided every morning by a little rest of

ten minutes. The officers get together and chat. Jean stayed by himself, alone with his memories of the day before. His thoughts returned, persistently, to the parsonage at Longueval. Yes, Mrs. Scott was the more charming of the two. Miss Percival was only a child. He saw again Mrs. Scott at the curé's little table. He heard again her story, told with such frankness and so naively. The slightly foreign tone of her peculiar, penetrating voice still charmed his ears—he was again in the church. She was there, in front of him, bending over her *prie-dieu*, her pretty head in her two little hands. Then the organ began to sound, and in the shadows at a distance Jean could see Bettina's elegant, refined profile.

A child! Was she only a child? The trumpets sounded. The drill began again. Fortunately, this time, no more commands, no more responsibilities. The four batteries executed the evolutions together. This large body of men, horses and carriages could be seen wheeling in every way, sometimes drawn out in a long line of battle, sometimes contracted into a compact body. The soldiers leaped from their horses, saw to the gun, took it off the carriage which went off on a trot—and put it in place ready for firing with surprising rapidity. Then the carriages returned, the guns were mounted again, the soldiers sprang into the

saddle and the regiment rushed across the field at a rapid rate.

Bettina began slowly to get the advantage of Mrs. Scott in Jean's thoughts. She appeared to him smiling and blushing amid the sunlit waves of her dishevelled hair—*Monsieur Jean*—she called him *Monsieur Jean*, and his name never sounded so pleasant to him—and those last hand-shakings at parting, as they got into the carriage. Miss Percival's was a little warmer than Mrs. Scott's—a very little—really—she had taken off her gloves to play the organ, and Jean could still feel the pressure of the little bare hand which lay, fresh and soft, in the artillery-man's ugly paw.

“I was mistaken just now,” said Jean to himself, “Miss Percival is the prettier.”

The drill was over. The batteries drew up close behind one another, the guns exactly in line, and the regiment filed off with a great uproar, a whirlwind of dust. When Jean, sword in hand, passed in front of the colonel, the two images of the two sisters were so blended and confused in his memory that they united, and in some way disappeared in each other, and became one and the same person. All comparison became impossible through the strange ambiguity of the parallel terms.

Mrs. Scott and Miss Percival remained thus inseparable in Jean's mind until he could see them again. The impression made by their unexpected meeting was not effaced; it remained so fresh and sweet that Jean was restless and disturbed.

“Can it be” said to himself, “that I have been so foolish as to fall in love at first sight. But, no; one falls in love with one woman—not two women at once.”

That encouraged him. He was very young—this big boy—twenty-four years old. Love had never come fully, freely, openly into his heart. He knew very little about love, except in novels, and he had read very few novels. He was not an angel, however. He found the grisettes of Souvigny graceful and pretty enough; when they wanted him to tell them they were charming, he said so very willingly; but as for thinking of love in connection with these trivial, ephemeral fancies, he never thought of such a thing.

Paul de Lavardens had wonderful power of passion and imagination. His heart could always accommodate three or four intense love affairs at the same time, which lived there, fraternally, on the best of terms. Paul had the talent of finding in this little town of fifteen thousand souls, any number of pretty girls, all ready to be adored. He was in a perpetual

state of discovering America, when in truth he only returned to it.

Jean had seen very little of the world. Paul had taken him perhaps a dozen times to balls, and parties at the neighboring chateaux. He had come away with a feeling of constraint, of embarrassment, and *ennui*. He concluded that such entertainments were not for him. His tastes were simple and sedate. He liked solitude, labor, long walks, open space, horses, books. He was somewhat rustic and provincial. He loved his native village and all the old relics of his childhood, which spoke to him of by-gone days. A quadrille in a salôn struck terror to his heart; but every year at the *fête patronale* at Longueval, he danced merrily enough with the farmers' wives and daughters.

If he had seen Mrs. Scott and Miss Percival at home, in Paris, in all the splendid luxury, and brilliant elegance of their surroundings, he would have looked at them from a distance, with curiosity, as charming *objects d'art*. Then he would have gone home, and slept, no doubt, as usual, as peacefully as possible.

Yes, but that was not the way it had happened; and hence his surprise, his trouble. These two women, by the merest chance, had appeared to him amid surroundings which were familiar to him, and which for

that reason had been singularly favorable to them. Simple, good, frank and cordial, they had been that first day. And charmingly pretty, in the bargain, which never hurts anything. Jean fell under the charm at once—and he was there yet.

At the hour when he was dismounting at the quarters, the Abbé Constantin was starting joyfully on his campaign. The old priest's head was completely turned. Jean had not slept very much, and the poor curé had not slept at all.

He rose very early in the morning, and with all the doors closed, alone with Pauline, he counted his money over and over, spreading his hundred louis out on the table, and taking as much delight in handling them as a miser. All that money belonged to him! to him! that is, to his poor.

“Don't go too fast, Monsieur le Curé,” said Pauline. “Be economical. I think a hundred francs is enough to distribute to-day.”

“It is not enough, Pauline, it is not enough. I can have but one such day in my life, but I shall have that. Do you know how much I am going to give away, Pauline?”

“How much, Monsieur le Curé?”

“A thousand francs.”

“A thousand francs?”

“Yes, we are millionaires now. All the treasure of America is ours, and shall I practice economy? Not to-day at any rate. I have no right.”

At nine o'clock, having said mass, he started out, and there was a shower of gold all along his way. They all had their share; those who confessed their poverty, and those who tried to conceal it. Every gift was accompanied with the same little speech:

“This comes from the new owners of Longueval, two Americans—Madame Scott, and Miss Percival. Remember the names, and pray for them to-night.”

Then he went away, without waiting for thanks; across the fields, through the wood, from hamlet to hamlet, from cottage to cottage. A kind of intoxication possessed him. Everywhere that he went there were exclamations of joy and astonishment. All these gold pieces fell, as by a miracle, into these poor hands accustomed to receive only little pieces of silver.

The curé committed follies, real follies. He did not know what he was doing, he was beside himself. He gave even to those who did not ask.

He met Claude Rigal, an old sergeant who had left one of his arms at Sébastopol, now growing gray, for time passes and the soldiers of the Crimea will soon be old men.

“Here” said the curé, “here are twenty francs for you.”

“Twenty francs! but I ask for nothing, I do not need it. I have my pension.”

His pension! seven hundred francs!

“Very well!” replied the curé, “this will buy you some cigars; but listen, this comes from America.” He repeated his little *story* about the new owners of Longueval.

He visited a good woman whose son had been ordered to Tunis.

“Well! how is your son?”

“Very well, Monsieur le Curé, I received a letter yesterday. He is very well, and he does not complain. Poor boy! I have been saving for a month, and I think I shall soon have ten francs to send him.”

“You can send him thirty. Take this.”

“Twenty francs, Monsieur le Curé! You give me twenty francs!”

“Yes, I give them to you.”

“For my boy?”

“For your boy. Only listen, you must know where they come from; and you must be sure to tell your son when you write to him.”

The curé for the twentieth time repeated his panegyric of Mrs. Scott and Miss Percival.

He reached home at six o'clock, exhausted with fatigue, but joy in his soul.

“ I have given it all away ! ” he cried as soon as he saw Pauline, “ given it all ! given it all ! ”

He dined, and then went in the evening to recite his service for the month of Mary; but when he went up to the altar, the harmonium was mute—Miss Percival was no longer there.

The little organist of the day before, was at that moment very much perplexed. Spread out on the two divans in her dressing-room, were the marvelous waves of a white toilette and a blue toilette; and Bettina was trying to decide which of these two dresses she should wear that evening to the opera. Both were charming, but it was necessary to make a choice. She could wear only one. After hesitating a long time, she decided on the white one.

At half past nine the sisters were going up the grand staircase at the opera. As they entered their box the curtain was rising on the second scene in the second act of *Aïda*—the act with the ballet and the march.

Two young men, Rodger de Puymartin and Louis de Mortillet, were sitting in the front row of a box on the floor of the house. The ballet-dancers were not yet *en scène*, and these gentlemen having nothing to

do, amused themselves by looking around the house.

The appearance of Miss Percival made quite a sensation for them both.

“Ah! ah!” said Puymartin, “there she is, the little nugget of gold!”

Both turned their opera-glasses upon Bettina.

“She is dazzling to-night—the little gold nugget—just look at the turn of her shoulders—the curves of her arms—a young girl, and yet a woman.”

“Yes, she is exquisite—and made of money in the bargain.”

“Fifteen millions, it seems; fifteen millions in her own right, and silver mines increase in value.”

“Bérulle told me, twenty-five millions, and Bérulle is well posted on American affairs.”

“Twenty-five millions! A nice little plum for Romanelli!”

“How for Romanelli?”

“Report says that he is to marry her, that the marriage is decided.”

“It may be that a marriage is arranged, but with Montessan, not with Romanelli. Ah! here is the ballet at last!”

They stopped talking. The ballet in *Aïda* lasts only five minutes, and both these young men came on purpose for those five minutes. It behooved them to

enjoy them, respectfully, religiously; for there is this peculiarity about a certain class of habitués of the opera, that they chatter like magpies when they ought to be silent and listen, and, on the contrary, they preserve an admirable silence when they would be permitted to talk while looking.

The trumpets had sounded their last flourish in honor of Radamés. In front of the great Sphinx, beneath the green palm trees, the glittering ballet dancers advanced and took possession of the stage.

Mrs. Scott watched the evolutions of the ballet with much interest and pleasure; but Bettina suddenly became thoughtful as she saw in a box on the other side of the house, a tall, dark young man. Miss Percival was debating, and said to herself:

“What shall I do? How shall I decide? Must I marry that tall handsome young man opposite me who stares at me so, through his opera-glass—for it is I he is watching—he will come here presently during the *entr’acte*; and when he comes, I have only to say to him, ‘It is done! Here is my hand—I will be your wife’—and it would be done. Princesse, I would be Princesse! Princesse Romanelli! Princesse Bettina! Bettina Romanelli! It harmonizes well, it sounds very agreeable: ‘Madame la Princesse is served.’ ‘Will Madame la Princesse go to ride to-morrow

morning?' Would it amuse me to be Princesse? Among all the young men in Paris who for a year have been running after my money, this Prince Romanelli is the best of them all. I must make up my mind to marry, some day. I think he loves me. Yes, but do I love him? No, I think not; and I would like so much to love! Oh! yes, I would like it so much!"

At the very hour when these thoughts were occupying Bettina's pretty head, Jean was sitting alone at his desk, with a big book under the lamp shade, looking over the history of Turenne's campaigns, and taking notes. He had been instructed to deliver a course of lectures to the non-commissioned officers, and he was very prudently preparing for the next day's duty.

But all at once in the midst of his notes, *Nordlingen*, 1645; *les dunes*, 1658; *Mulhausen et Turckheim*, 1674-1675, there appeared a sketch—Jean did not draw badly—the picture of a woman came of its own accord under his pen. What was she doing there in the midst of Turenne's victories, this pretty little woman? And then, which one was it! Mrs. Scott or Miss Percival? How did he know! They were so much alike! And painfully and laboriously Jean returned to the history of Turenne's campaigns.

At that same hour, the Abbé Constantin, on his knees beside his little walnut bedstead, was calling all

the blessings of heaven on the two women who had caused him to spend such a sweet happy day.

He prayed God to bless Mrs. Scott in her children, and to give Miss Percival a husband after her heart.

V.

Formerly Paris belonged to Parisians, and that formerly is not so very distant; thirty or forty years, at most. The French at that period, owned Paris—just as the English own London; the Spanish, Madrid; and the Russians, St. Petersburg. That time has passed. There are yet frontiers for other countries, there are no longer any for France. Paris has become an immense tower of Babel, an international, miscellaneous city. Foreigners do not only come to visit Paris; they come to live there.

We have now in Paris, a Russian colony, a Spanish colony, a Turkish colony, an American colony; these colonies have their churches, their bankers, their physicians, their newspapers, their ministers, their priests, and their dentists. Foreigners have already made conquest of the larger part of the Champs-Élysées and the Boulevard Malesherbes; they advance, they spread—we retreat, driven back by the invasion; we are forced to expatriate ourselves. We are obliged to found

colonies in the plain of Possy, in the plain of Monceau, in quarters which formerly were not Paris at all, and which are not yet altogether Paris.

Among these foreign colonies, the most numerous, the richest, the most brilliant, is the American colony. There comes a moment when an American feels that he is rich enough; a Frenchman, never. The American then stops, takes breath, and while taking care of his capital, no longer saves his income; he knows how to spend; the Frenchman knows only how to save.

A Frenchman has only one single luxury, his revolutions. Prudently and wisely he saves himself for them, knowing well they cost France dearly, but that at the same time they will be the occasion of very advantageous investments. The financial history of our country is only one long loan, perpetually open. The Frenchman says to himself:

“Hoard! hoard! hoard! Some of these days there will be a revolution which will make the five per cents fall to fifty or sixty francs. I will buy some. Since revolutions are inevitable, let us at least try to derive some profit from them.”

It is continually told how many people are ruined by revolutions, but a still larger number of people are enriched by revolutions.

Americans yield readily to the attractions of Paris.

There is nowhere in the world a city where a fortune can be spent more easily or more agreeably. By reason of their parentage and origin, this attraction was felt by Mrs. Scott and Miss Percival to an extraordinary degree.

Canada, which no longer belongs to us, is the most *French* of our colonies. The recollection of the mother-country is still strong and sweet to the heart of the exile in Quebec and Montreal. Suzie Percival had received from her mother an entirely French education, and she had brought up her sister in the same love for France.

As soon as the avalanche of millions descended upon them, the same desire took possession of both; to live in Paris. They desired Paris, as one's country is desired. Mr. Scott made some opposition.

“When I am no longer here,” said he, “and only come to spend two or three months of every year in America, to look after your interests, you will find that your incomes will diminish.”

“What does it matter!” replied Suzie, “we are rich, too rich. Let us go, I entreat you. We will be so contented! so happy!”

Mr. Scott allowed himself to be persuaded; and early in January, 1880, Suzie wrote to her friend Katie

Norton, who had been living in Paris for years, the following letter :

“ Victory ! It is decided ! Richard has consented. I shall arrive in April, and become French again. You have offered to take charge of all the preparations for our establishment in Paris. I am horribly inconsiderate—I accept.

“ I would like to be able to enjoy Paris as soon as I get there, and not lose my first month chasing after upholsterers, carriage makers and horse dealers. I would like to find at the station, when I get off the train, *my* carriage, *my* coachman, and *my* horses. I would like to dine *with myself*, at my own house. Either rent or buy a house, engage servants, choose the carriages, the horses, the liveries. I leave it all to you. Only let the liveries be blue, that is all. This line is added at Bettina’s request, who is looking over my shoulder as I write you.

“ We shall bring with us to France only seven persons. Richard will bring his valet ; Bettina and I and our maids, two governesses for the children, and two boys, Toby, and Bobby,—our little grooms. They ride so well. Two perfect little loves ; the same height, the same figures, almost the same faces ; we could never find, in Paris, grooms better matched.

“ Every thing else, servants, and furniture we leave in New York. No, not everything. I forgot to mention four little ponies, four little jewels—black as ink,

with white feet, all around—all four of them; we did not have the heart to leave them. We drive them in a phæton, and both Bettina and I can drive four-in-hand very well. Can women drive four-in-hand early in the morning, in the Bois, without too much scandal? They can here.

“Above all, my dear Katie, do not count the cost. Spend money foolishly, like a spendthrift. That is all I ask of you.”

The same day that Mrs. Norton received this letter, the news came out of the failure of a certain Garneville, a large speculator, who had overreached himself. He had prepared for a fall, when he should have been ready for a rise. This Garneville had taken possession of a house only six weeks before, newly built, and with no other fault than a too glaring magnificence.

Mrs. Norton took a lease of it, at a hundred thousand francs a year, with the privilege of buying the house and furniture, at two millions, during the first year. A fashionable upholsterer was engaged to correct and modify the excessive luxury of the gaudy staring furniture. That done, Mrs. Scott's friend was so fortunate as to put her hand, the very first thing on two of those eminent artists, without whom no large house can be properly established, or carried on.

In the first place a first-class *chef de cuisine* who

had just left an old family in the faubourg Saint Germain—to his great regret—for his sentiments were aristocratic. It was very painful to him to go into the service of foreigners.

“Never,” said he to Mrs. Norton, “never would I have left the service of Madame la Baronne, if she had kept up her household on the same footing; but Madame la Baronne has four children—two sons who are spendthrifts, and two daughters who will soon be the proper age to marry. They must have marriage portions. So, Madame la Baronne is obliged to retrench a little, and the establishment is no longer extensive enough for me.” This distinguished artist had conditions to make, which, though extravagant, did not frighten Mrs. Norton, who knew she was negotiating with a man of unquestionable merit; but, he, before deciding, asked permission to telegraph to New York. He wished to make some inquiries. The reply was favorable. He accepted.

The other great artist who had been in charge of some of the leading racing stables was of unusual talent, and was about to retire on the fortune he had made. He consented, however, to organize Mrs. Scott’s stables. It was understood that he was to have *carte blanche* in the purchase of horses, was not to wear livery, was to select the coachman,

grooms and ostlers; that there was never to be less than fifteen horses in the stables, that no bargain was to be made with a carriage maker, or saddler except through him, and that he was to mount the box only in the morning, *in ordinary dress*, to give lessons in driving to the ladies and children, if it were necessary.

The *chef* took possession of his ranges, and the head groom of his stables. All the rest was only a question of money, and Mrs. Norton used to the utmost the full powers given her. She carried out the instructions she had received. In the short period of two months she performed real miracles, so that the Scott establishment was absolutely complete, and absolutely faultless.

And, so, when, at half-past four, on the 15th of April, 1880, Mr. Scott, Suzie and Bettina alighted from the Havre express, on the platform of the station at Saint Lazare, they found Mrs. Norton, who said to them :

“Your *calèche* is here, in the court—behind the *calèche* is a landau, for the children; and behind the landau, an omnibus for the servants. The three carriages bear your monogram, are driven by your coachmen, and drawn by your horses. You live at 24 Rue Murillo, and here is the *menu* of your dinner this evening. You invited me two months ago, I

have accepted, and even taken the liberty of bringing fifteen people with me. I have provided everything, even the guests. Do not be alarmed! You know them all, they are mutual friends; and from this evening we can judge of the merits of your cook.

↙ Mrs. Norton gave Mrs. Scott a pretty little *carte* with a gold band, on which were these words:

“ *Menu du diner du 15, avril, 1880.*

and below:

Consommé à la Parisienne,

“ *Truites saumonées à la russe, etc.*”

The first Parisian who had the honor and pleasure of doing homage to the beauty of Mrs. Scott and Miss Percival, was a little scullion, about fifteen years old, who, dressed in white, his willow basket on his head, was passing just as Mrs. Scott's coachman was making his way slowly through the crowd of carriages at the station. The little scullion stopped short, on the sidewalk, stood glaring in amazement at the two sisters, and then boldly shouted, full in their faces, the single word,

“ *Mazette!* ”

When she saw wrinkles and white hair begin to come, Madame Recamier said to one of her friends:

“ Ah! *ma chere*, there are no more illusions for me. Ever since the day when I saw that the little chim-

ney-sweeps no longer turned in the street to look at me, I knew that it was all over."

The opinion of little scullions is worth as much in similar cases as the opinion of chimney-sweeps. All was not over for Suzie and Bettina. On the contrary, all was just beginning.

Five minutes later Mrs. Scott's *calèche* was rolling along the Boulevard Haussman at the slow, measured pace of two admirable horses; Paris numbered two Parisians more. The success of Mrs. Scott and Miss Percival was immediate, decided, and startling. The beauties of Paris are not classified and catalogued like the beauties of London. They do not have their portraits published in the illustrated journals, and they do not allow their photographs to be on sale at the stationers; there always exist however a little staff of about twenty women who represent the grace, the elegance, and the beauty of Paris—and these women after ten or a dozen years of service pass into the reserve corps, like old generals.

Suzie and Bettina at once took their places on this little staff. It was the affair of twenty-four hours—not even twenty-four hours, for it all was done between eight o'clock in the morning and midnight of the day following their arrival.

Imagine a sort of spectacle in the three acts, the

success of which increased with each tableau.

1st. A ride on horseback in the Bois, at ten o'clock in the morning, with the two marvellous grooms imported from America.

2nd. A walk at six o'clock in the *Allée des Acacias*.

3rd. An appearance in the evening, in Mrs. Norton's box at the Opera.

The two new-comers were immediately noticed and appreciated by the thirty or forty persons who constitute a sort of mysterious tribunal, and render in the name of all Paris, a verdict from which there is no appeal. These thirty or forty people have, from time to time, a fancy for declaring *charming*, some woman who is obviously ugly. That is enough. She is *charming*, dating from that day.

The beauty of the two sisters was beyond dispute. In the morning, their grace, their elegance and air of distinction were admired; in the afternoon, it was declared that they had the free, firm steps of young goddesses; and in the evening there was only one voice as to the ideal perfection of their shoulders. The game was won. All Paris, from that time, saw the two sisters with the eyes of the little scullion on the Rue d'Amsterdam; all Paris repeated his "Mazette!" that is with the changes and variations imposed by the customs of society.

Mrs. Scott's sal^on immediately took shape. The habitués of three or four great American houses went *en masse* to see the Scotts, who had three hundred people at their first Wednesday. Their circle increased very rapidly; there was a little of everything in their list: Americans, Spaniards, Italians, Hungarians, Russians, and even Parisians.

When Mrs. Scott related her history to the Abbé Constantin, she did not tell him everything; one never does tell everything. She knew that she was charming, liked to have it acknowledged, and did not hate to be told so. In short, she was a coquette. Would she have been a Parisian, otherwise. Mr. Scott had full confidence in his wife, and allowed her perfect freedom. He was seldom seen.

He was an honest man, and felt sometimes embarrassed that he had made such a marriage, that he had married so much money. Having a taste for business, he took pleasure in devoting himself entirely to the management of the two enormous fortunes in his hands, in increasing it constantly, and in saying every year to his wife and sister-in-law:

“You are still richer than you were last year.”

Not contented with guarding with much interest and skill the investments which he had left in America, he embarked in large enterprises in France, and

succeeded in Paris as he had succeeded in New York. In order to make money, there is nothing like having no need to make it.

Mrs. Scott was courted, she was courted immensely . . . She was courted in French, in English, in Spanish, in Italian,—for she knew these four languages,—and this is another advantage which foreigners have over poor Parisians, who generally know only their mother-tongue and have not the resource of international passions.

Mrs. Scott did not drive people out of doors with a stick. She had ten, twenty, thirty adorers at the same time. None of them could boast of any preference whatever; she was the same to all—agreeable, playful, smiling. It was clear that she only amused herself at the game, and never took a serious part in it. She played for the pleasure, the honor, the love of the art. Mr. Scott never had the least uneasiness; he was perfectly right in being undisturbed. Moreover, he enjoyed the success of his wife; he was happy in seeing her happy. He loved her very much—a little more than she loved him—she loved him very well, and that explains all. There is a great difference between *well* and *much*, when these two adverbs are placed after the verb: *to love*.

As for Bettina, there was around her a curious

chase, a detestable circle! Such a fortune! Such a beauty! Miss Percival arrived in Paris on the 15th of April; a fortnight had not passed before offers of marriage began to rain down. In the course of the first year, Bettina amused herself keeping this little account very exactly—in the course of the first year she might, if she had wished, have married thirty-four times—and such a variety of aspirants.

Her hand was asked for a young exile, who, in certain events, might be called to a throne—quite small, it is true, but still a throne.

Her hand was asked for a young duke, who would make a great figure at court, when France—and this was inevitable!—should recognize her errors and return to her legitimate rulers.

Her hand was asked for a young prince, who would take his place on the steps of the throne, when France—and this was inevitable!—should reunite the chain of Napoleonic traditions.

Her hand was asked for a young republican member, who had just made a very brilliant *début* at the *Chambre* and for whom the future had brilliant destinies in store, for the Republic was now established in France upon indistructible foundations.

Her hand was asked for a young Spaniard, of the highest rank; and it was intimated to her, that the

ceremonials of the contract would take place in the palace of a queen, who lives not very far from the *Arc de l'Etoile* . . . Her name is found, too, in the *Almanac Bottin*, for there are queens whose names are in *Bottin* to-day between a notary and a herborist. It is only the kings of France who no longer live in France.

Her hand was asked for the son of an English peer, and for the son of a member of the House of Lords in Vienna; for the son of a banker in Paris, and the son of a Russian ambassador; for a Hungarian count and for an Italian prince; and also for brave little young men who had nothing, neither name nor fortune. But Miss Bettina gave them all a turn in the waltz; and believing themselves to be irresistible, they hoped to have made her heart beat. //

Nothing up to the present had made her little heart beat, and the reply to all had been the same :

“No! no! Still no! Always no!”

Some days after the performance of *Aïda*, the two sisters had a long conversation on this important, eternal question of marriage. A certain name mentioned by Mrs. Scott, provoked the most distinct and energetic refusal on Miss Percival's part.

And Suzie, laughing, said to her sister: “You will, however, be forced to marry at last Bettina . . .”

“Yes, certainly; but I should be so sorry, Suzie, to marry without love. It seems to me that to make up my mind to do such a thing, there would have to be every chance of dying an old maid; and I am not that yet.”

“No, not yet.”

“Let us wait then, let us wait!”

“We will wait! But among all these lovers whom you have dragged after you for a year, there have been some very handsome, agreeable ones; and it is certainly a little strange that none of them—.”

“None! dear Suzie, absolutely not one! Why should I not tell you the truth? Is it their fault? Have they been awkward? Would they, if they had been more skilful, have found the way to my heart? Or, is it my fault? Can this road to my heart be, perhaps, a horrible, steep, stony, inaccessible road, by which no one can pass? Can I be a wicked little creature, hard and cold, and condemned never to love?”

“I do not think so.”

“Nor I, either; I have never felt anything which resembles love. You laugh—and I can guess why you laugh. You are saying to yourself, ‘Look at this little girl who pretends to know what it is to love!’ You are right, I do not know; but I can imagine a

little. To love, dear Suzie, is it not to prefer a certain person to every one, to all the world?"

"Yes, it is very much like that."

"And not to be tired of seeing that person and hearing him? Is it not to cease to live when he is no longer here, and to begin to live again as soon as he re-appears?"

"Oh! oh, that would be a very great love!"

"Ah! well! that is love as I dream of it."

"And that is the love that never comes?"

"Oh! yes, it does. And yet the person preferred by me, to every one else—do you know who it is?"

"No! I do not know, but I have a slight suspicion."

"Yes, it is you my darling, and perhaps it is you my naughty sister, who makes me so insensible and cruel. I love you too much. All my love—you have all my love—there is no room for any one else. To prefer some one to you! To love some one better than you—I never can!"

"Oh, yes—."

"Oh, no! To love in another way, perhaps? but better, no. He need not expect it, the man I am waiting for and who does not come."

"Do not fear, dear Betty. There will be room in

your heart for all whom you should love—for your husband, for your children—and that, too, without making me, your old sister, lose anything. The heart is very little, but it is very large.”

Bettina kissed her sister tenderly, then leaning her head coaxingly on Suzie’s shoulder :

“ If, however, you are tired of keeping me here with you, if you are in a hurry to be rid of me, do you know what I will do ? I will put the names of two of these gentlemen in a basket and draw lots. There are two, who, strictly speaking, would not be positively disagreeable to me.”

“ Which two ? ”

“ Guess.”

“ The Prince Romanell’s ? ”

“ He is one ; and the other ? ”

“ M. de Montesson.”

“ Two. The very two. Yes, these two would be acceptable—but only acceptable, and that is not enough.”

This is why Bettina awaited with extreme impatience, the day of their departure for Longueval. She was tired of so much pleasure, of so much success, and so many offers of marriage. The whirlpool of Paris life had drawn her in, from the day of her arrival, and would not release her. Not an hour of rest,

or quiet. She felt the need of being left to herself, alone with herself, for a few days at least; to consult and question herself, at her leisure, in the quiet and solitude of the country, to belong to herself again at last.

So Bettina was very merry and glad when they took the train for Longueval on the 14th of June at noon. As soon as she found herself alone with her sister :

“ Ah ! ” she cried, “ how happy I am. We can take breath. To be alone with you for ten days ! for the Nortons and the Turners do not come until the 25th, do they ? ”

“ No, not until the 25th. ”

“ We will spend our time on horseback and driving in the forests, in the fields. Ten days of freedom. And during all the ten days, no lovers ! no lovers ! and all these lovers, *mon dieu* ! what are they in love with ? With me, or my money ! That is the mystery, the impenetrable mystery. ”

The engine whistled, the train was slowly moving. A crazy little whim seized Bettina, she leaned out of the window and cried, waving her hand :

“ Adieu, my lovers, adieu ! ” Then she threw herself back in her seat and laughed like a child.

“ Oh ! Suzie ! Suzie ! ”

“What is the matter?”

“A man with a red flag in his hand—he saw me! He heard me! And he looked so astonished.”

“You are so foolish!”

“Yes, that is true—to cry out at the window in such a way—but not to be happy at the thought that we will be all alone, only we two—.”

“All alone! all alone! Not quite alone. To begin with, we will have two persons to dine with us this evening.”

“Ah! that is true, and I shall not be at all sorry to see those two persons again. Yes, I shall be very glad to see the old curé, and still more the young officer.”

“What! still more?”

“Certainly; because it was so touching, what the notary at Souvigny told us the other day, it was so good, what this tall artillery officer did when he was so little, so good, so good, so good, that I shall seek an occasion this evening to tell him what I think of it, and I shall find one!”

Then Bettina abruptly changing the conversation; “Was a dispatch sent to Edwards yesterday, for the ponies?”

“Yes, before dinner.”

“Will you let me drive to the chateau? It

would please me so much to go through the village, make a grand entrée, and come up with around turn in front of the steps."

"Yes, yes, it is agreed that you are to drive the ponies."

"Ah! how good you are, dear Suzie!"

Edwards had arrived at the chateau three days before, to see that everything connected with the stable was in order. He condescended to come himself for Mrs. Scott and Miss Percival. He brought the four ponies in the phaeton. He was waiting at the station surrounded by quite a little crowd. Nearly all Souvigny was there. The ponies, driven through the principal streets, had made quite a sensation. Everybody came out and asked eagerly:

"What is the matter? What is going on?"

Some ventured the opinion:

"A travelling circus, perhaps."

But from every side came the reply:

"You did not see, then, what it was like—the carriage, and the harness which shone like gold, and the little horses with white roses on each side of their heads."

A crowd had gathered in the station-yard, and the curious had learned that they were to have the honor of

being present at the arrival of the ladies of Longueval.

There was a slight feeling of disappointment when the two sisters appeared—very pretty, but very simple, in their travelling costumes.

These good people had a slight expectation of seeing two fairy princesses, clothed in silk and brocade, sparkling in rubies and diamonds.

But they stared in amazement when they saw Bettina go slowly round the four ponies, stroking one after the other lightly, and examining each detail of the harness with a knowing air.

It must be acknowledged that it was not disagreeable to Bettina, to produce such an effect on all this crowd of wondering provincials.

Her little review over, Bettina, without too much haste, drew off her kid gloves, and drew on a pair of buck skin driving gloves, which she took from a pocket in the apron.

Then she slipped, in some way, into the seat, in Edwards' place; receiving from him the reins and the whip, with great dexterity, before the horses had time to be conscious that they had changed hands. Mrs. Scott, was seated at her sister's side. The ponies stamped, pranced, and threatened to rear.

“Mademoiselle must be on the lookout—the ponies are full of life to-day,” said Edwards.

“Never fear,” replied Bettina, “I understand them.”

Miss Percival’s hand was very firm and at the same time very light and true. She held the ponies a few moments, forcing them to keep well in rank, then covering the horses with a long double curve of her whip, she started her little equipage off at a single bound, with incomparable skill, and drove royally out of the station-yard, followed by a long murmur of astonishment and admiration.

The trot of the four ponies resounded on the pavement of Souvigny. In going through the town she kept a tight rein, but as soon as she reached the open, level road she gave the ponies their heads and they went like lightning. “Oh! how happy I am, Suzie!” she cried. “We will trot and galop on these roads all by ourselves. Do you want to drive, Suzie? It is such a pleasure when you can let them go like this. They are such goers and so gentle, take the reins—”

“No, keep them; it pleases me to see you so pleased.”

“Oh! I am delighted! I like so much to drive four-in-hand, when there is room enough to go fast. In Paris, even in the morning, I did not dare,—people stared so, and that annoyed me. But here,—no one! no one! no one!”

Just as Bettina, exhilarated with the fresh air, and

freedom, cried triumphantly: "No one! no one! no one!" a horseman appeared coming slowly towards the carriage.

It was Paul de Lavardens. He had been on the watch for an hour, for the pleasure of seeing the Americans pass.

"You are mistaken," said Suzie to Bettina, "Here comes some one."

"A peasant. A peasant does not count; he will not ask to marry me."

"He is not a peasant at all. Look!"

Paul de Lavardens, as he passed the side of the carriage, bowed to the two sisters in a manner so entirely correct as to proclaim him, at once, a Parisian.

The ponies were going so fast that the meeting was like a flash of lightning. Bettina cried:

"Who is the gentlemen who just bowed to us?"

"I hardly had time to see him, but it seems to me that I know him."

"You know him?"

"Yes, and I would wager that I saw him last winter at my own house."

"Mon Dieu! Can he be one of the thirty-four?"

"Is it going to begin again?"

VI.

On that same, day at half-past seven o'clock, Jean went to the parsonage for the curé, and together they took the road to the chateau.

For a month, an army of workmen had been in possession of the chateau; the village inns and wine shops had made a fortune. Immense freight-wagons had brought cargoes of furniture and upholsteries from Paris. Forty-eight hours before Mrs. Scott's arrival, Mademoiselle Morbeau, the directress of the post, and Madame Lormier, the Mayor's wife, had made their way into the chateau; their accounts turned everyone's head. The old furniture had disappeared, banished to the attic; one wandered through a perfect museum of marvels. And the stables! and the coach-houses! A special train had brought from Paris, under Edward's personal supervision, twelve carriages, and such carriages! Twenty horses, and such horses!

The Abbé Constantin thought he knew what luxury was. Once a year he dined with his bishop, Monseig-

neur Foubert, an aimable, rich prelate, who entertained largely. The curé, until now, had thought nothing could be more sumptuous than the episcopal palace at Souvigny, than the chateaux of Lavardens and Longueval. He began to understand, after what he heard of the new splendors of Longueval, that the luxury of the fine houses of to-day wonderfully surpasses the heavy, severe luxury of the ancient houses of former days.

After the curé and Jean had gone a short distance on the road leading to the chateau, through the park:

“Look, Jean,” said the curé, “what a change! All this part of the park used to be left uncared for, and see, now it is all gravelled and raked. I shall no longer feel at home here, as formerly. I shall not find my old maroon velvet arm-chair, in which it so often happened that I fell asleep after dinner. And if I go to sleep this evening, what will become of me? You must keep watch, Jean. If you see that I am beginning to get sleepy, you must come behind me and pinch my arm a little. You promise me?”

“Yes, godfather, I promise you.”

Jean listened only indifferently to the curé's discourse. He was very impatient to see Mrs. Scott and Miss Percival again; but his impatience was mingled with very great anxiety. Was he going to

find them, in the grand salôn of Longueval, the same as he had seen them in the little dining-room at the parsonage? Perhaps, instead of two women so perfectly simple and easy, enjoying their improvised dinner, on that first day—who met him so graciously and affably, he was going to find two fashionable dolls, elegant, cold, and correct. Was his first impression going to be effaced, to disappear? Or, would it, on the contrary, grow deeper and sweeter in his heart?

They went up the steps, and were received in the lobby by two tall footmen with the most dignified and imposing of manners. This lobby was formerly an immense room, cheerless and bare, in its walls of stone; to-day, the walls were covered with beautiful tapestries representing mythological subjects. The curé scarcely looked at the tapestries, but that was enough to perceive that the goddesses who were walking in the fields wore costumes of antique simplicity.

One of the footmen opened the folding doors of the grand salôn. Here, the old marchioness was usually sitting, at the right of the large fire-place, and on the left stood the maroon arm chair. The maroon arm-chair was there no longer. The old furniture of the time of the Empire was replaced by furniture of marvellous antique tapestry, and a great many little

chairs and little *poufs* of all colors and shapes, were placed here and there with an appearance of disorder which was the height of art.

Mrs. Scott, on seeing the curé and Jean, rose, and going to meet them, said :

“How kind of you to come, Monsieur le Curé, and you too monsieur ; and I am glad to see you again, my first, my only friends here !”

Jean breathed again. It was just the same woman.

“Permit me,” added Mrs. Scott, “to present my children to you—Harry, Bella,—come here.”

Harry was a very pretty little boy of six years, and Bella, a very pretty little girl of five ; they had their mother’s large dark eyes and golden hair.

After the curé had kissed the two children, Harry, who was looking admiringly at Jean’s uniform, said to his mother :

“And the soldier, shall I kiss the soldier, too, mamma ?”

“If you like,” replied Mrs. Scott, “and if he is willing.”

The two children, were installed on Jean’s knees, in a few minutes, and overwhelmed him with questions.

“Are you an officer ?”

“Yes, I am an officer.”

“In what ?”

“In the artillery.”

“The artillery. They are the ones who fire off the cannon. Oh! how much I would like to be very close to the cannon and hear it fire.”

“Will you take us, some day, when they fire off the cannon; say, will you?”

Mrs. Scott, during this time was talking with the curé, and Jean, while answering the children's questions, was looking at Mrs. Scott. She wore a dress of white muslin, but the muslin was almost concealed by a mass of valenciennes flounces. It was cut square in front, very low. Her arms were bare to the elbow, a large bunch of red roses on the corsage, and a red rose fastened in her hair with a diamond *agrafe*; that was all.

Mrs. Scott suddenly saw that Jean was going through a military examination by the two children:

“Oh! I beg your pardon, monsieur! Harry! Bella!”

“Leave them with me, I beg of you, madame.”

“I am so sorry to keep you waiting for dinner! My sister has not come down yet. Ah! here she comes.”

Bettina entered. The same white muslin dress, the same profusion of lace, the same red roses, the same grace, the same beauty, the same smiling, gracious, cordial welcome.

“ I beg you to excuse me, Monsieur le Curé. Have you pardoned me my horrible giddiness of the other day ? ”

Then turning to Jean and holding out her hand.

“ *Bonjour Monsieur . . . Monsieur.* Ah ! I cannot recollect your name, and yet it seems to me that we are old friends ? *monsieur ——— ?* ”

“ Jean Reynaud.”

“ Jean Reynaud, that is it. *Bonjour,* monsieur Reynaud ! but I give you fair warning that we shall be such old friends, in a week, that I shall call you Monsieur Jean. Jean is a very pretty name.”

Dinner was announced. The governesses came for the children. Mrs. Scott took the curé's arm ; Bettina, Jean's. Until the moment of Bettina's appearance, Jean had said to himself : “ Mrs. Scott is the prettier ! ” When he saw Bettina's little hand slip into his arm, and when she turned her lovely face around to him he said to himself “ Miss Percival is the prettier ! ” But he fell back into the same perplexity when he was seated between the two sisters. If he looked to his right, it was on that side he saw himself threatened with falling in love ; and if he turned to the left the danger immediately changed places, and passed over to the left side.

The conversation was animated, unreserved, and

easy. The two sisters were in raptures. They had already taken a walk in the park. They had promised themselves a long ride in the forest, the next day. To ride on horseback—that was their passion, their *folie*! And it was also Jean's passion; so much so that, at the end of fifteen minutes, he had been invited to join them the next day and had accepted with delight.

No one knew the vicinity better than he; it was his birth-place. He would be so happy to do the honors and show them any number of charming little places, which they never would discover without him.

“Do you ride every day?” asked Bettina.

“Every day, and sometimes twice. In the morning on duty, and in the evening for pleasure.”

“Early in the morning?”

“At half past five.”

“At half past five every morning?”

“Yes, except on Sunday.”

“Then you must rise. . . ?”

“At half past four.”

“And is it daylight?”

“Oh! at this season, broad daylight.”

“That is astonishing, to rise at half past four! Our day very often ends just at the hour when you are beginning yours. And do you like your profession?”

“Very much, Mademoiselle. It is so pleasant to have your work lie straight before you, with all your duties plain, and well-defined.”

“Still,” said Mrs. Scott, “not to be one’s own master, to be obliged always to obey!”

“Perhaps that suits me best. There is nothing easier than to obey; and then, to learn to obey is the only way to learn to command.”

“Ah! what you say is very true!”

“Yes, no doubt,” said the curé, “but what he does not say, is, that he is the most distinguished officer in his regiment, is that . . . ”

“Godfather, I beg of you.”

The curé, in spite of Jean’s protests, was going on with the panegyric of his godson, when Bettina, interrupted:

“It is needless, Monsieur le Curé, to say anything. We know all that you would tell us. We have had the curiosity to inquire about, oh! I was going to say Monsieur Jean, about Monsieur Reynaud. But in deed! the accounts were wonderful!”

“I am curious to know what they were” said Jean.

“Oh! nothing—nothing—you shall know nothing about them. I do not want to make you blush, and you would be obliged to blush.

Then turning to the curé:

“And about you, too, Monsieur le Curé, we have had accounts of you. It seems that you are a saint.”

“Oh, as to that, it is quite true,” cried Jean.

This time, it was the curé who cut short Jean's eloquence. The dinner was nearly over. The old priest had not gone through the dinner without considerable trepidation. Several times he had been served with unknown complicated constructions, upon which he ventured with a trembling hand—he was afraid everything would tumble to pieces: quivering castles of jelly, pyramids of truffles, fortresses of cream, parapets of pastry and towers of ices. The Abbé Constantin dined heartily, however, and did not flinch before two or three glasses of champagne. He did not dislike good living. Perfection is not of this world; and if gluttony is, as they say, a deadly sin, how many good priests will go to perdition!

The coffee was served on the terrace, in front of the chateau. The sound of the old village clock, striking nine, was heard at a distance. The woods and meadows slept. The outlines of the park grew indistinct and vague. The moon rose slowly above the tops of the tall trees.

Bettina placed a box of cigars on the table.

“Do you smoke?” said she to Jean.

“Yes, mademoiselle.”

“Take one then, monsieur Jean, there I have said it. Take, but no; listen.”

And speaking in a low tone, as she offered him the cigars:

“It is dark now, you can blush at your ease. I am going to tell you, what I would not tell you at the table just now. The old notary at Souvigny, who was your guardian, came to see my sister about the payments for the chateau. He told us what you did after your fathers’ death, what you did for that poor mother, and that young girl. We were very much touched by it, my sister and I.”

“Yes, monsieur,” continued Mrs. Scott, “and that is the reason we have received you to-day with so much pleasure. We would not have given every one such a welcome, you may rest assured. Now take your cigar. My sister is waiting.”

Jean could not find a word to reply. Bettina was there, in front of him, with the box of cigars in both hands, and her eyes fixed full on Jean’s face. She was enjoying that very genuine, very keen delight which may be expressed in this phrase:

“It seems to me that I am looking at an honest young man.” “And now,” said Mrs. Scott, “let us sit down and enjoy this lovely night. Take your coffee and smoke.”

“And we will not talk, Suzie, we will not talk. This grand stillness of the country is adorable after the uproar of Paris. Let us be still, without speaking. Let us look at the sky, and the moon, and the stars.”

So all four began to carry out the little programme with great enjoyment. Suzie and Bettina, quiet, resting, absolutely separated from their life of the day before, and already feeling an affection for this country which had just received them and was going to keep them.

Jean was less calm; Miss Percival's words had moved him deeply; his heart had not yet resumed its regular beating.

But, happiest of all, was the Abbé Constantin. He had thoroughly enjoyed the little episode which had put Jean's modesty to such a severe, yet such a pleasant, test. The abbé loved his godson so dearly. The tenderest of fathers never loved more fondly his dearest child. When the old curé looked at the young officer, he often said to himself:

“Heaven has blessed me! I am a priest, and yet I have a son!”

The abbé was lost in a very delightful reverie; he found himself at home again, more at home than he ever imagined could again be the case; his ideas grad-

ually became confused and entangled. Reverie became drowsiness, drowsiness became sleep; the disaster was soon complete, irreparable. The curé was asleep, sound asleep. The extraordinary dinner and the two or three glasses of champagne had, perhaps, something to do with the catastrophe.

Jean had not observed anything. He had forgotten his promise to his godfather. And, why had he forgotten it. Because Mrs. Scott and Miss Percival had chosen to put their feet on the foot-stools in front of their big willow chairs, lined with cushions. Then they leaned back, lazily in their chairs, and their muslin skirts were raised a little, a very little, but still sufficiently to disclose four little feet, whose outlines appeared very clear and distinct in the moonlight, under the two pretty billows of white lace. Jean looked at the little feet and asked himself this question:

“Which are the smaller?”

While he was trying to solve the problem, Bettina suddenly said to him in a low tone:

“Monsieur Jean! Monsieur Jean!”

“Mademoiselle?”

“Look at Monsieur le Curé, he has gone to sleep.”

“Oh, mon dieu! it is my fault.”

“What! Your fault?” asked Mrs. Scott in the same low tone.

“Yes, my godfather rises early in the morning, and goes to bed very early; he charged me not to let him go to sleep. Very often, after dining with Madame Longueval, he took a nap; and you have given him such a charming welcome, that he has gone back to his old habits.”

“And he is quite right—” said Bettina; “do not make a noise, we will not waken him.”

“You are so kind, mademoiselle, but the evening is growing a little cool.”

“Ah! that is true. He may take cold. Wait, I will go and fetch a wrap.”

“I think, mademoiselle, that it would be better to try and waken him, so adroitly that he will not suspect that you have seen him asleep.”

“Leave it to me” said Bettina. “Suzie, let us sing together, very low at first, and then gradually raise our voices. Let us sing.”

“Willingly, but what shall we sing?”

“*Something childish.* The words are of no consequence.”

Suzie and Bettina began to sing:

“If I had but two little wings”

“And were a little feathery bird,” etc.

Their voices fell, exquisitely sweet and clear, on the deep silence.

The abbé heard nothing, he did not stir. Charmed with the little concert, Jean said to himself :

“ It is to be hoped that my godfather will not wake up too soon ! ”

The voices rose clearer and louder :

“ But in my sleep to you I fly ; ”

“ I'm always with you in my sleep ! ” etc.

And still the abbé did not yield.

“ How he sleeps, ” said Suzie, “ it is a sin to waken him. ”

“ But we must ! Louder, Suzie, still louder ! ”

The full harmony of their voices now burst forth unrestrained :

“ Sleep stays not through a monarch bids ”

“ So I love to wake ere break of day, ” etc.

The curé awoke with a start. After a short moment of alarm, he breathed free. Evidently no one had noticed that he had been asleep. Very carefully and slowly he drew himself up straight again. He was saved !

A quarter of an hour afterwards, the two sisters, accompanied the curé and Jean to a little park gate, which opened into the village, not far from the parsonage. As they approached the gate Bettina suddenly said to Jean :

“ Ah ! monsieur, for three hours I have had a ques-

tion to ask you. This morning, on our arrival, we met on the road a slender young man, with a blond moustache; he was riding a black horse; he bowed to us as we met."

"It is Paul de Lavardens, one of my friends. He has already had the honor of being presented to you—but quite casually. So he has a great desire to be presented again."

"Ah! well! you can bring him some day," said Mrs. Scott.

"Not before the 25th," cried Bettina, "not before! not before! Until then we do not wish to see anyone, except you, Monsieur Jean. But you—it is very strange, and I do not know why it is—you are no longer *anyone*, for us. The compliment is not very well turned, perhaps; but do not make a mistake, it is a compliment just the same. It is my intention, in saying it, to be exceedingly agreeable to you."

"And so you are, mademoiselle."

"So much more if I could make myself understood. *Au revoir, Monsieur Jean, et à demain.*"

Mrs. Scott and Miss Percival went slowly back to the chateau:

"And, now, Suzie," said Bettina, "scold me, scold me well; I expect it; I deserve it."

"Scold you! For what?"

“I am sure you are going to say that I was too free with that young man.”

“No, I shall not tell you so. That young man has impressed me very favorably, from the first. He inspires me with perfect confidence.”

“And me, too.”

“I am convinced that it will be well for us both to make him our friend.”

“With all my heart, so far as I am concerned. And all the more, Suzie, that I have seen so many young men since we came to France; oh, yes, I have seen so many; and this is the first, positively the first, in whose eyes I have not clearly read this sentence: ‘*Mon Dieu! How glad I would be to marry the millions of this little person!*’ It was distinctly written in the eyes of all the others, but not in his eyes. And now let us go in. Good-night, Suzie.”

Mrs. Scott went to see her children, and kiss them in their sleep.

Bettina stood a long time, leaning on her elbow on the balcony.

“It seems to me,” she said to herself: “that I am going to like the country.”

VII.

The next morning, on returning from drill, Jean found Paul de Lavardens awaiting him at the barracks. He hardly gave him time to dismount—and as soon as they were alone:

“Tell me,” said he, “tell me, quickly, all about your dinner yesterday. I saw them myself in the morning. The little one was driving the four black ponies, at such a rate! I bowed to them—did you speak of me? Did they recognize me? When are you going to take me to Longueval? Answer, answer me!”

“Answer! answer! which question first?”

“The last one.”

“When will I take you to Longueval?”

“Yes.”

“In about ten days. They do not care to see any one, just yet.”

“But are you not going to Longueval again before ten days?”

“ Oh ! I, I am going again to-day, at four o'clock. But I do not count. Jean Reynaud, the curé's godson ! That is the way that I have so easily gained the confidence of these two charming women. I am introduced under the patronage and indorsement of the Church—and then, it has been discovered that I can be of service ; I know the country well ; they are going to make me useful, as a guide. In short, I am a nobody ; while you, Count Paul de Lavardens—you are a somebody. So, do not fear, your turn will come with the *fêtes* and balls, when it is necessary to be brilliant, and know how to dance. You will shine then in all your glory, and I shall go back, very humbly, to my obscurity.”

“ You may laugh at me as much as you please. It is none the less true, that, during these ten days, you will get the start—the start ! ”

“ How, the start ? ”

“ Look here, Jean, are you trying to make me believe that you are not already in love with one of those women ? Is it probable ? So much beauty ! so much wealth ! the wealth perhaps, even more than the beauty ! Such luxury as that upsets me, unsettles me ! I dreamed all night of those four black ponies, with their white roses, four cockades—and this little—Bettina—is it not ? ”

“Yes, Bettina.”

“Bettina! Countess Bettina de Lavardens! Isn't that rather pretty? And what a perfect little husband she will have in me! My vocation is, to be the husband of a woman absurdly rich. It is not so easy as you might suppose. You must know how to be rich, and I should have that talent. I have proved it; I have already squandered a good deal of money, and if mamma had not stopped me —! But I am all ready to begin again. Ah! how happy she would be with me! I would make her life like that of a fairy princess. In all her luxury she would be conscious of the taste, the art, the skill of her husband. I would spend my life in dressing her, advancing her, in making her famous in the world. I would study her beauty, so that it should have the frame that suited it. ‘If it were not for him,’ she would say to herself, ‘I would not be so pretty.’ I would know, not only how to love her, but how to amuse her. She would have the worth of her money, both in love and in pleasure. Come, Jean, take me to Mrs. Scott's to-day; it would be a good move.

“I cannot, I assure you.”

“Oh! well, only ten days more, and then, I warn you, that I shall establish myself there, and I will not budge. In the first place, it will please mamma. She

is, still, a little prejudiced against these Americans ; she says that she will manage not to meet them, but I understand her ! When I come home some evening and say to her, ‘ Mamma, I have won the heart of a charming little person who is afflicted with a capital of twenty millions, and an income of two or three millions.’ They exaggerate when they talk about hundreds of millions. That evening, mamma will be delighted—because, what is it, that, in her heart, she desires for me ? Just what all good mothers desire for their sons, especially if their sons have committed follies ; either a rich marriage, or a discreet *liason*. I find both at Longueval—and I can easily adapt myself to either one or the other. Only, be so good as to let me know within ten days which of the two you give up ; Mrs. Scott or Miss Percival.”

“ You are crazy. I do not think—I never thought.”

“ Listen, Jean, you may be virtue and wisdom combined ; but, say what you may, and do as you will—Listen—and remember what I tell you. Jean, you will fall in love, in that house.”

“ I do not believe it,” cried Jean, laughing.

“ I am sure of it. *Au revoir !* I leave you now to your duties.”

Jean was perfectly sincere. He had slept well the night before. His second interview with the two sis-

ters had, as by magic, dispelled the slight inquietude which had disturbed him after the first meeting. There was too much money in that house for a poor fellow like him to find a place there, honorably.

Friendship, was a different thing. He desired with all his heart, and he would try with all his strength, to gain the esteem and regard of these two women. He would try not to see how beautiful Suzie and Bettina were; he would try not to forget himself again, as he did the night before, in looking at the four little feet on the footstools. They had said to him frankly, cordially, "You will be our friend."

That was all that he desired! To be their friend! And that he would be!

During the following ten days everything conspired for the success of this attempt. Suzie, Bettina, the Abbé and Jean lived in the closest and most confidential intimacy. In the mornings, the two sisters took long drives with the curé; and in the afternoon, long rides on horseback, with Jean.

Jean no longer tried to analyse his feelings; he no longer asked himself, whether he leaned to the right or to the left. He felt the same devotion, the same affection, for both of these women. He was perfectly happy, perfectly contented. Then he could not be in

love, for love and contentment rarely dwell harmoniously in the same heart.

It was, however, with a little uneasiness and regret, that Jean saw the day approach, which would bring to Longueval, the Turners, the Nortons, and the whole tide of the American colony. The day came very quickly.

On Wednesday, the 24th of June, at four o'clock, Jean went to the château. Bettina received him, quite out of humor.

“Such a disappointment,” said she, “my sister is not well. A slight head-ache—nothing serious. It will be all gone to-morrow; but I dare not go to ride with you, all alone. In America, I could; but not here, could I?”

“Certainly not,” replied Jean.

“So I must send you away, and that makes me so sorry.”

“And I, too, am sorry to go; and to lose this last day, which I had hoped to spend with you. However, since it must be! I will come to-morrow to inquire for your sister.”

“She will see you herself, then; I assure you it is nothing serious. Will you grant me a few minutes conversation? I have something to say to you. Sit down and listen to me, now. My sister and I intended

to get you into a corner of the salôn after dinner, and she would have told you what I will now try to say for us both. Only I am a little nervous—do not laugh. It is very serious. We both want to thank you for having been so kind, so good, so attentive, ever since we arrived.”

“Oh! mademoiselle. I beg of you—It is I . . .”

“Oh! do not interrupt me. You put me all out. I do not know how to go on. I insist, however, that it is for us to thank you—not you, us. We came here, two strangers. We were so fortunate as to find friends, immediately—yes, friends. You took us by the hand. You went with us to see the farmers, and the keepers, and your godfather took us to see the poor—and everywhere that we went, they loved you so much, that they immediately began to like us a little on your account. They worship you here, do you know it?”

“I was born here—all these good people have known me from my childhood, and are grateful to me for all that my grandfather and my father did for them. And then, I belong to their race—the race of peasants. My great grandfather was a farmer at Bargecourt, a village two leagues from here.”

“Oh! oh! you seem to be very proud of it!”

“Neither proud, nor ashamed.”

“I beg pardon. I thought you seemed a little proud! Well, then, I can reply to that; that my mother’s great-grandfather was a farmer in Bretagne. He went to Canada toward the close of the last century, when Canada still belonged to France. And do you like this country very much, where you were born?”

“Very much; but I shall soon, perhaps, be obliged to leave it.”

“Why?”

“When I am promoted I shall be changed into another regiment, and then I must go from post to post. But when I get to be an old, retired general or colonel, I shall certainly come back to live and die here in my father’s little house.”

“And always alone?”

“Why, alone? Indeed, I hope not.”

“You mean to marry?”

“Yes, certainly.”

“And you are endeavoring to marry?”

“No. One may think about marrying, but one must not seek to marry.”

“But there are people who do seek to marry, and some of them have wished to marry you.”

“How do you know that?”

“Oh, I know very well all about your little affairs. You are what is called, a good match ; and I repeat it, some have wished to marry you.”

“Who told you so?”

“Monsieur le Curé.”

“My godfather did wrong,” said Jean, with considerable spirit.

“No, no, he did not do wrong ; if any one was to blame it was I, and to blame through kindness and not from curiosity, I assure you. I discovered that your godfather was never so happy as when he was speaking of you. During our walks in the morning, when alone with him, in order to please him, I mention you, and he tells me all about your life. You are rich—you are quite rich. You receive two hundred and thirteen francs and some centimes a month from the Government. Isn't that so?”

“Yes,” replied Jean, deciding to take his share of the curé's indiscretions with a good grace.

“You have an income of eight thousand francs.”

“Almost, not quite.”

“Added to that, your house, which is worth about thirty thousand francs. In short, you are in excellent circumstances, and already your hand has been asked for.”

“My hand asked for? No! no!”

“Yes, indeed! . Yes, indeed! Twice—and you have refused two very fine marriages—two very fine *dots*—if you prefer. It is all the same thing to so many people. Two hundred thousand francs on one side, three hundred thousand on the other. That is considered an immense sum here, and you have refused it. Tell me why? If you only knew how curious I am to know!”

“Ah, well! It was in relation to two very charming young girls——”

“That is understood; they always say that.”

“But whom I hardly knew. I was compelled—for I resisted—I was compelled to spend two or three evenings with them last winter.”

“And then?”

“Then—I do not know very well how to explain to you. I had only a feeling of embarrassment, of uneasiness, of dullness, of weariness——”

“In short,” said Bettina, boldly, “not the slightest suspicion of love.”

“No, not the least; and I very wisely went back to my bachelor quarters, for I think it is better not to marry at all than to marry without love. That is my opinion.”

“And it is mine, also.”

She looked at him. He looked at her. And all at

once, to the great surprise of both, they found nothing more to say—nothing at all.

Fortunately, at this moment, Harry and Bella came rushing into the *salon* with cries of delight.

“Monsieur Jean! Monsieur Jean! Are you there, Monsieur Jean? Come and see our ponies.”

“Ah!” said Bettina, her voice a little unsteady. “Edwards has just returned from Paris, and has brought some mites of ponies for the children. Let us go and see them?”

They went out to see the ponies, which were, indeed, worthy of figuring in the stables of the King of Lilliput.

VIII.

Three weeks have passed. Jean is to leave with his regiment the next day for the camp of Cercottes, in the forest d'Orleans; they will be ten days on the march in going and coming, and ten days in camp. The regiment is to return to Souvigny on the 10th of August.

Jean is no longer calm; Jean is no longer happy. He sees the moment of departure come, with impatience, and, at the same time, with dread. With impatience, for he is suffering martyrdom; he is in haste to escape it. With dread, for during these twenty days, what will become of him without seeing her, without speaking to her, in short, without her? Her, that is Bettina! He loves her!

Since when? Since the first day, since that meeting in the curé's garden, in the month of May! That was the truth! But Jean struggled and argued with himself against this truth. He thought he had loved Bettina only since that day when they, two, had such a

pleasant friendly talk in the little salôn. She was sitting on the blue divan, near the window, and while she chatted, she amused herself in smoothing out the rumpled toilette of a Japanese princess, one of Bella's dolls, which was lying on a chair, and which Bettina had picked up mechanically.

How did Miss Percival happen to speak to him of those two young girls whom he might have married. And yet, the question did not displease him. He had replied, that if he did not then feel any inclination to marry, it was because the interviews with these young girls had caused him no emotion, no agitation. He had smiled as he said this; but in a few minutes afterwards he smiled no longer. He had suddenly learned the meaning of these emotions and agitations. Jean did not deceive himself; he was fully aware of the extent of his wound;—it had struck at his heart.

Jean, however, did not despair. That very day as he went away he said to himself: "Yes, it is severe, very severe, but I shall recover from it." He sought an excuse for his madness, and he found it in circumstances. This lovely girl had been with him too much during the last ten days, too much alone with him! How could he resist such a temptation? He was fascinated with her charms, her grace, her beauty. But the next day, twenty people were expected at the

château, and that would be the end of this dangerous intimacy. He would have the courage to stay away, to lose himself in the crowd; he would not see Bettina so often and so informally. Not to see her at all, that he could not think of! He would be Bettina's friend, since he must be only her friend. For any other thought never even entered Jean's mind; that thought would not only have seemed preposterous to him, it would have been monstrous. There was not a more honorable man than Jean in the world; and Bettina's money was a horror to him, a positive horror.

A crowd of people did indeed invade Longueval on the 25th of June. Mrs. Norton came with her son Daniel, and Mrs. Turner with her son Philip. Young Daniel and young Philip, were both of them members of the famous brotherhood of Thirty-Four. They were old friends; Bettina had treated them as such, and had told them frankly that they were absolutely wasting their time; they were not discouraged, however, and formed the centre of a very anxious, assiduous court which surrounded Bettina.

Paul de Lavardens had made his appearance on the scene, and had rapidly become a favorite with every one. He had received the brilliant and comprehensive education of a young man who devotes himself to pleasure. Was it a question, what they should do to

amuse themselves? Riding, croquet, lawn-tennis, polo, dancing, charades and theatricals, he was ready for all, he excelled in all. His superiority was startling, impressive. By general consent, Paul became the organizer and leader of all the *fêtes* at Longueval.

Bettina was not deceived for a moment; Jean presented Paul de Lavardens to her, and he had hardly gone through the necessary formalities, before Bettina leaning over to Suzie, whispered in her ear:

“The thirty-fifth!”

However, she accorded Paul a gracious welcome, so gracious that for several days he was foolish enough to misinterpret it. He thought that his own personal attractions had won for him such a pleasant, cordial reception. It was a great mistake. He had been presented by Jean; he was Jean’s friend; in Bettina’s eyes all his merit lay in that.

Mrs. Scott’s château was open house; her invitations were not for one evening, but for every evening, and Paul eagerly accepted every evening. His dream was realized. He had found Paris again at Longueval!

But Paul was neither a fool nor a coxcomb. Without doubt, Miss Percival made him the object of particular attention and favors. She was pleased to have long, very long, conversations with him, all alone. But what was the continual, the inexhaustable subject

of these conversations? Jean, Jean, always Jean! and Paul was flippant, giddy and frivolous, but he became serious as soon as Jean was mentioned; he knew how to appreciate him, how to love him.

Nothing was easier for him, nothing was sweeter to him than to praise the friend of his boyhood. And as he saw that Bettina listened to him with pleasure, Paul gave free rein to his eloquence.

But Paul—and it was his privilege—desired one evening to have the benefit of his chivalrous conduct. He had been talking with Bettina for a quarter of an hour; the conversation ended, he went to find Jean at the other end of the salôn, and said to him:

“You left the field free to me, and I have thrown myself boldly at Miss Percival.”

“Well! you have no reason to be dissatisfied with the result of your undertaking. You seem to be the best friends in the world.”

“Yes, certainly we are friends. I can go that far, but no farther. Nothing can be more agreeable, more charming than Miss Percival; but, at least, I deserve some credit for acknowledging it—for, between us, she makes me play a distasteful and ridiculous rôle, a rôle which does not belong to one of my age. At my age one is a lover, not a confidant.”

“A confidant?”

“ Yes, my dear fellow, a confidant! That is the position they have given me in this house! You saw us just now; well, do you know what we were talking about? Of you, my dear fellow, nothing but you! and it is the same every evening. There is no end to the questions: You were brought up together? You both studied with the Abbé Constantin? He would soon be a captain? And after that?—commandant?—and after that?—colonel, *et cetera* . . . *et cetera* . . . Ah! Jean, my friend Jean. What a beautiful dream you might have, if you only would.”

Jean was angry, almost in a passion. Paul was very much astonished at this sudden burst of anger.

“ What is the matter with you? It seems to me that I have said nothing.”

“ I beg your pardon. I was wrong; but how could such an absurd idea enter your head?”

“ Absurd? I do not think it absurd. I have had the same idea myself.”

“ Ah! You —”

“ Why, ‘ ah! me?’ If I have had it, you can have it; you are better than I.”

“ Paul, I beg of you!”

Jean’s distress was evident.

“ We will say no more about it; what I want to say, in brief, is, that Miss Percival finds me agreeable, very

agreeable; but as for thinking seriously of me, such an idea never entered her head. Now I am going to turn my attention to Mrs. Scott, without much confidence, however. Look here, Jean, I may amuse myself in this house; but I shall never make my fortune here."

Paul now devoted himself to Mrs. Scott; but the very next day he was surprised to encounter Jean, who began to take a place very regularly in Mrs. Scott's special circle—for she, like Bettina, had her own little court. Jean tried to find there, protection and a place of safety.

The day of their memorable conversation about marriages without love, Bettina, for the first time had felt suddenly awaken in her that need of love, which sleeps, but not very profoundly, in the hearts of all young girls. The same sensation had come at the same moment in the soul of Jean and in the soul of Bettina. He, alarmed, thrust it rudely away from him. She, on the contrary, gave herself up, in all the freshness of her perfect innocence, to this new tenderness and emotion.

She was waiting for love, what if this were love! What if the man who could be her thought, her life, her soul, should be, he, Jean! Why, not? She knew him better than all those who for a year past had

fluttered around her fortune, and in all that she knew of him there was nothing to discourage the confidence and love of a pure young girl.

Both, in fact, were right; both were influenced by duty, and by truth: she, in yielding; he, in resisting. She, in not thinking for a moment of Jean's obscurity and poverty; he, in recoiling from this mountain of millions as he would have recoiled from a crime. She, in thinking that she had no right to parley with love; he, in thinking that he had no right to parley with honor.

For these reasons, Bettina grew more tender and surrendered herself more completely to love's first appeal; while Jean became more gloomy and troubled from day to day. He was not only afraid of loving, he was afraid of being loved.

He should have stayed away; he had tried, but he could not. The temptation was too strong. He continued his visits; and she would come to meet him, with extended hands, a smile upon her lips, and her heart in her eyes. Everything about her said: "Let us try to love each other, and if we can, let us love!"

Fear seized him. He hardly dared touch these hands which were stretched out to meet his. He tried to avoid those tender, smiling, questioning glances which sought his own. He trembled at the necessity

of talking with Bettina, of listening to her. It was then that Jean took refuge near Mrs. Scott; and it was then that Mrs. Scott listened to those hesitating, troubled words which were not addressed to her, but which, however, she took to herself.

As yet, there was nothing to prevent Suzie's mistake. Bettina had not spoken to her of these vague emotions which filled her soul. She guarded and caressed the secret of her dawning love, as a miser guards and caresses his first accumulations. The day when she could see clearly into her own heart, the day when she could be sure that she loved; ah! how she would talk on that day, and how happy she would be in telling Suzie all.

Mrs. Scott had ended by attributing to herself the honor of Jean's melancholy, which day by day became more marked. She was flattered by it,—it never displeases a woman to think herself beloved—but, she was grieved at the same time. She had a great esteem and regard for Jean; it pained her to think that he was sad and unhappy on her account.

Suzie, besides, had the consciousness of innocence. Sometimes she was, with others, a coquette. It was no great sin to torment them a little. These others had nothing to do, they were good for nothing else; it occupied, while it amused them; it helped them pass

the time, and her, too. But Suzie could not reproach herself with having been coquettish with Jean. She was conscious of his merit and of his superiority; he was different from the rest; he was a man to suffer seriously, and that Mrs. Scott did not desire. Two or three times she had been on the point of speaking to him, very gently, and affectionately, but she had reflected that Jean was going away for a number of days; on his return, if it was necessary, she would convince him by her manner, that love must not come to interfere with their friendship.

Jean was going the next day. Bettina had insisted that he should spend this last day at Longueval, and dine at the château. Jean had refused, alleging the preparations he must make before his departure. He came, on foot, about half-past ten in the evening. Several times on the way he had almost determined to go back.

“If I had the courage,” he said to himself, “I would not see her again. I leave to-morrow, and I will not return to Souvigny while she is here. My resolution is firmly fixed.”

But he went on; he wanted to see her again, for the last time.

As soon as he had entered the salôn, Bettina came running, to meet him:

“ You are come at last! How late you are ! ”

“ I have been very busy. ”

“ And you are going to-morrow ? ”

“ Yes, to-morrow. ”

“ Early ? ”

“ At five o'clock. ”

“ Shall you take the road past the park, and through the village ? ”

“ Yes, that is just the route we are to take. ”

“ Why do you go so early in the morning ? I would have gone to the top of the terrace to see you pass, and bid you adieu. ”

Bettina had taken Jean's burning hand and kept it in hers. He drew it away, sadly.

“ I must go, ” said he, “ and speak to your sister. ”

“ Presently ! she has not seen you—there are a dozen persons round her. Come, sit here a little while with me. ”

He was obliged to sit down at her side.

“ We, too, are going away, ” she said.

“ You ? ”

“ Yes, we received a dispatch, an hour ago, from my brother-in-law, which gave us great delight. He did not expect to return for a month ; he will be here in twelve days ; he will sail from New York, on the Labrador, day after to-morrow. We shall go to meet

him at Havre. We will take the children and start day after to-morrow. It will do them good to be at the sea-shore a few days. How glad my brother-in-law will be to know you. But he knows you already, for we have spoken of you in all our letters. I am sure that you will like each other. He is so good. How long shall you be gone ?”

“Twenty days.”

“Twenty days, in a camp.”

“Yes, mademoiselle, the camp of Cercottes.”

“In the forest d’Orleans, I found that out from your godfather this morning. I am very glad to go to meet my brother-in-law, but, at the same time I am sorry to be away from here; only for that I should have paid a visit to your godfather every morning. He would have given me news of you. Will you, in a few days write my sister a little bit of a letter, if it is only four lines—that will not take you long—just to tell her how you are, and that you have not forgotten us ?”

“Oh ! I can never forget you, your kindness, your goodness, never ! mademoiselle, never !”

His voice trembled. He was afraid of betraying his emotion. He rose :

“Mademoiselle, I must go and speak to your sister. She sees me, she will think it strange.”

He crossed the salôn. Bettina looked after him. Mrs. Norton had just seated herself at the piano to play a waltz for the young people. Paul de Lavardens came up to Miss Percival:

“Will you do me the honor, mademoiselle?”

“Thank you. I believe I have just promised Monsieur Jean,” replied she.

“But if you have not promised him, you will dance with me.”

“Oh! yes.”

Bettina went across the room to Jean who had just sat down by Mrs. Scott.

“I have told a story;” said she to him. “M. de Lavardens asked me for this waltz, and I told him I had promised you. You will say yes, will you not? You do not object.”

To hold her in his arms, to breathe the perfume of her hair! Jean’s strength deserted him. He dared not accept.

“I am very sorry, mademoiselle. I cannot—I am ill this evening. I came only to make my adieu before my departure—but it would be impossible for me to dance.”

Mrs. Norton struck up the prelude to the waltz.

“Well! mademoiselle,” said Paul coming up gaily, “Is it his waltz or mine?”

“Yours,” said she, sadly, still looking at Jean.

She was so troubled that she answered without really knowing what she said. She immediately regretted that she had accepted. She would rather have stayed there, near him. But it was too late. Paul took her hand and led her away. Jean rose, and looked after Bettina and Paul; a cloud passed before his eyes, he suffered cruelly.

“The only thing for me to do,” said he to himself, “is to take advantage of this waltz and go away. Tomorrow morning I will write a few lines to Mrs. Scott, and make my excuses.”

He reached the door. He did not look at Bettina again. If he had, he would have stayed. But Bettina saw him, and suddenly said to Paul:

“Thank you very much monsieur, but I am a little tired. Let us stop, if you please. Excuse me.”

Paul offered her his arm.

“No, thank you,” said she.

The door had just closed. Jean had gone. Bettina hastily crossed the salôn, leaving Paul standing alone, very much astonished, and at a loss to understand what was passing.

Jean was already on the porch, when he heard some one call:

“Monsieur Jean! Monsieur Jean!”

He stopped and turned around. She was there at his side.

“You are going away, without saying good-bye to me?”

“Pardon me, I am very tired.”

“Then, you must not walk home. It looks like a storm.”

She held out her hand.

“Why! It is raining now.”

“Oh, only a little.”

“Come and take a cup of tea with me in the little salôn, and I will send you home in a carriage.”

And turning to one of the footmen:

“Tell them to have a coupé ready immediately.”

“No, mademoiselle, I beg of you. The fresh air is good for me. I shall feel better if I walk. Let me go.”

“Very well, then! But you have no overcoat. You must take one.”

“I shall not feel the cold; but you, in that thin dress. I must go, so that you will go in.”

Without even taking her hand, he escaped and ran rapidly down the steps.

“If I touch her hand,” said he to himself, “I am lost. My secret will escape me.”

His secret! He did not know that Bettina read his heart like an open book.

When Jean reached the bottom of the steps, he hesitated for an instant. These words were on his lips:

“I love you! I adore you! And that is why, I must see you no more!”

But he must not utter them, he must fly; and in a few moments he was lost in the darkness.

Bettina stood there on the door steps, framed in the light which streamed through the open door. Big drops of rain, driven by the wind, fell on her bare shoulders, and made her shiver; but she did not heed them; she only heard the beating of her heart.

“I knew very well that he loved me,” she said to herself, “but now I am very sure that I too—oh! yes, I too—”

Turning suddenly, the reflection, in one of the large mirrors in the hall, of the two tall footmen standing, motionless, near the oaken table, recalled her to herself. Bettina took a few steps in the direction of the salôn, she heard the laughter and the waltz still going on. She stopped. She wanted to be alone, all alone, and turning to one of the servants:

“Go,” said she, “and tell Madame that I am very much fatigued; I am going to my room.”

Annie, her maid, was sleeping in an arm chair.

She sent her away. She threw herself down upon the sofa. A sweet sadness oppressed her.

The door opened, and Mrs. Scott entered.

“Are you ill, Bettina?”

“Ah! Suzie, it is you, my Suzie! How glad I am that you have come! Sit down by me, close to me.” She threw herself into her sister’s arms, like a child, pressing her burning cheeks to Suzie’s cool shoulder, then, suddenly, she burst into a flood of tears.

“Bettina! my darling, what is the matter?”

“Nothing, nothing, I am nervous; it is for joy.”

“For joy?”

“Yes, yes, wait; but let me cry a little, it will do me good! Do not be frightened!”

Suzie’s kisses calmed and soothed her.

“It is over now, and I am going to tell you. I want to talk to you about Jean.”

“Jean! Do you call him Jean?”

“Yes, I call him Jean. Have you not noticed how sad and depressed he has been for some time?”

“Yes, I have indeed.”

“He would come, and he would go immediately to you, and stay there absorbed; and to such a point, silent, that for several days I asked myself—forgive me for speaking so plainly, if he were not in love with you, my Suzie. You are so charming, it would not

have been strange! But no; it was not you, it was me!”

“You?”

“Yes, me! Let me tell you! He hardly dared look at me. He avoided me, he fled from me. He was afraid of me—actually afraid—and, now, to do me justice, I am not frightful. Am I?”

“Certainly not.”

“Ah! he was not afraid of me, it was my frightful money! My money which attracts all the rest, and is so tempting to them, my money frightens him and drives him to despair, because he is not like the rest—because he—.”

“Take care, my darling, perhaps you are mistaken.”

“Oh! no, I am not mistaken. Just now, on the steps, as he was going away, he said a few words to me. The words were nothing, but if you had seen his distress, in spite of his efforts to conceal it! Suzie, darling Suzie, by my love for you—and God knows how great a love it is—I am convinced, that if I had been a poor, little girl, without any money, instead of being Miss Percival, Jean would have taken my hand just now, and have told me that he loved me; and if he had told me so, do you know what I would have answered him?”

“That you loved him, too.”

“Yes, and that is why I am so happy. It is my firm resolve to marry for love. I do not say that I worship Jean, not yet; but I am just commencing to, Suzie, and the beginning is so sweet.”

“Bettina, it frightens me to see you in such a state of exaltation. I do not doubt, that Monsieur Reynaud has a great regard for you.”

“Oh! more than that—more than that.”

“Love, then, if you will. Yes, you are right, you are not mistaken. He loves you; and are you not worthy, my darling, of all the love that any one can give for you? As for Jean,—you see how easy it is for me also, to call him Jean,—you know what I think of him; very often, during the last month, we have had occasion to say to each other—‘I esteem him highly, very highly.’ But, in spite of that, is he a suitable husband for you?”

“Yes, if I love him.”

“I try to reason with you, and you interrupt me. Bettina, I have an experience which you cannot have; do not misunderstand me. Ever since our arrival in Paris, we have been thrown into very gay, brilliant, aristocratic society. Already, if you had been willing, you might have been a marchioness or a princess.”

“Yes, but I was not willing.”

“Then you are contented to be only Madame Reynaud?”

“Perfectly, if I love him.”

“Ah, you always come back to that.”

“Because, that is the only question. There is no other, and I want to be reasonable. I confess that this question is not quite decided, and that perhaps I am a little hasty. Now, see, how sensible I can be. Jean is going away to-morrow. I shall not see him again for three weeks. I will have all that time to question myself, to deliberate, to find out the real state of my feelings. Beneath all my flighty ways, I am serious and thoughtful; you will acknowledge that?”

“Yes, I acknowledge it.”

“Well, then! I ask you this, as I would ask our mother, if she were here. If at the end of these three weeks, I say to you: ‘Suzie, I am sure that I love him!’ will you let me go to him, all by myself, and ask him if he will have me for his wife? That is what you did with Richard.”

“Yes, I will let you.”

Bettina kissed her sister tenderly, and murmured in her ear these words:

“Thank you, mamma.”

“Mamma! mamma! that is what you called me

when you were a child, when we two were alone in the world, when I undressed you at night, in our poor little room, in New York, when I held you in my arms, when I put you in your little bed, and sang you to sleep. And since then, Bettina, I have had only one wish in the world ; your happiness. That is why I ask you to reflect well. Do not answer me. Do not talk any more about it. I want to leave you quiet and calm. You have sent Annie away. Would you like me to be your little mamma again, to-night, and undress you and put you to bed as I used to do ? ”

“ Oh, yes, I would like it so much. ”

“ And will you promise me to be wise, when you have gone to bed ? ”

“ As wise as an image. ”

“ And you will do your best to go to sleep ? ”

“ All that I can. ”

“ Without thinking of anything ? ”

“ Without thinking of anything. ”

“ Very well, then ! ”

A few minutes later Bettina's pretty head was gently resting amid embroideries and laces. Suzie said to her sister :

“ I must go back to all these people who weary me so to-night. Before I go to my own room, I will

come and see if you are asleep. Do not talk any more. Go to sleep now."

She went out. Bettina was alone. She tried to keep her promise and go to sleep, but she only half succeeded. She fell into a light slumber, into an unconscious state, just between dreaming and waking. She had promised not to think of anything, and yet, she was thinking of him, only of him; but vaguely, indistinctly. She could not have told how long a time had passed, when suddenly it seemed to her there was some one in the room; she half opened her eyes, and recognized her sister. In sleepy tones she said to her :

"You know, I love him."

"Hush—go to sleep!"

"I am going to sleep."

Then she fell into a deeper sleep; lighter however, than usual—for about four o'clock in the morning she was awakened by a noise, which at any other time would not have disturbed her slumbers. The rain was falling in torrents, and beat against the windows in Bettina's room.

"Oh! It rains," she said to herself; "he will get wet!"

This was her first thought. She rose, and crossing the room, in her bare feet, threw open the shutter. The day dawned dark, stormy, and dismal; the sky

was overcast with heavy clouds ; the wind blew fiercely, driving the rain in sudden gusts.

Bettina did not lie down again ; she knew that it would be impossible for her to sleep. She put on a wrapper and stood by the window, watching the falling rain. Since he must really go, she wished he might have had pleasant weather and bright sunshine for his first day's march. Eight or ten leagues in this driving rain ! Poor Jean ! Bettina thought of little Turner, and little Norton, and Paul de Lavardens, who would sleep quietly until ten o'clock, while Jean would be exposed to all this storm.

Paul de Lavardens ! that name brought up a painful memory, that waltz, the evening before. To have danced when Jean's unhappiness was so evident ! In Bettina's eyes this waltz assumed the proportions of a crime ; what she had done was horrible ! And afterwards, had she not failed in courage and frankness in that last interview with Jean. He could not, dared not, say anything ; but she might have shown more tenderness, more *abandon*. Sad and suffering as he was, she never should have let him walk home. She ought to have kept him, to have kept him at any price. Jean must have gone away with the impression, that she was a cruel, heartless girl.

And in half an hour, he was going away for three

weeks. Ah! if she only could in any way! But there is a way. The regiment will pass by the park wall, below the terrace. Bettina is seized with a mad desire to see Jean go by. He will understand when he sees her there, at such an hour, that she has come to ask his forgiveness for her unkindness the evening before. Yes, she will go. But, she has promised Suzie to be as wise as an image; and is it so, to do what she is about to do? She will confess all to Suzie when she comes back, and Suzie will forgive her.

She will go! she will go! Only, what can she wear? She has only her ball dress, a muslin wrapper, and a pair of blue satin slippers. She would not dare to waken her maid; and yet, the time is so short, a quarter to five! At five, the regiment starts.

She must make her toilette with the muslin wrapper, and the satin slippers; she will find a hat, her little sandals, and the big Scotch cloak which she wears on rainy days in the hall. She opens her door with the greatest precaution; everything is still in the château; she steals through the halls and down the stairway.

If only the sandals are there, in their place! That, is her great anxiety. They are there; and she puts them on over her satin slippers, and wraps the big cloak around her. She can hear the storm outside

growing more violent. She discovers one of the immense umbrellas which the footmen use when they are on the box; she seizes one, she is ready, but, when she tries to go out, she finds that the doors are fastened with a heavy iron bolt. She tries to move it, but it remains firm, and the big hall clock slowly strikes five. It is the moment of his departure!

She must see him! She must see him! She makes a great effort. The bolt yields and slips back in its groove, giving Bettina's hand a little gash which makes it bleed; she wraps her handkerchief around it, takes her big umbrella, turns the key in the lock, and opens the door. At last! she is out of doors!

The storm is frightful. The wind and rain are raging. It will take five or six minutes to reach the terrace where she can see the road. She rushes bravely on, under the shelter of her big umbrella. She has gone but a short distance when a sudden, furious, gust of storm bursts upon Bettina, tears off her cloak, turns her umbrella inside out, and almost carries her off her feet. There is nothing left. The disaster is complete. Bettina has lost one of her little sandals. They were not sandals for real service, but only dainty, little sandals for fine weather.

Just at the moment when Bettina in despair is struggling against the tempest, her blue satin slippers

sinking into the wet gravel, the wind brings her the distant echo of the sound of trumpets. The regiment is starting. Bettina summons all her courage; she drops the umbrella, fastens on her sandal as well as she can, and rushes on again in the pouring rain.

At last she reaches the wood; the trees protect her a little. Another sound of trumpets—this time nearer. Bettina thinks she hears the rumbling of the wheels. She makes her last effort, and reaches the terrace. She is in time! She sees the trumpeters' white horses, and through the mist, the long, curved files of guns and wagons. She takes shelter under one of the old lindens, which border the terrace. She watches, she waits. He is there, in all that crowd of horsemen. Will she be able to recognize him? Will he, by chance, turn his head this way?

Bettina knows that he is lieutenant in the second battery of his regiment; she knows that a battery is composed of six guns and six wagons. The Abbé Constantin has told her so. The first battery must pass, then—that is, six guns and six wagons—and then he will come.

He comes, wrapped in his big coat; and it is he who first sees her, and recognizes her. He has just been thinking of a long walk he had with her, on this terrace, one evening, in the twilight. He raises his eyes,

and, there, in that very place, he sees her again! He bares his head, in all the rain, and bows to her, turning around on his horse as he goes farther away, and looking back as long as he can see her. He says again to himself, as he had said the night before :

“It is the last time!”

With both her hands, she waves him her adieux, and this motion many times repeated, brings her hands so near, so very near her lips, that one might almost think—

“Ah!” she says to herself, “if after this, he does not know I love him, and forgive me my money—”

IX.

It is the 10th of August, the day which is to bring Jean back to Longueval.

Bettina awaked very early in the morning, and rising, runs immediately to the window. The bright sunshine has already dispelled the mists of the morning. On the evening before, the sky was threatening and heavy with clouds. Bettina has slept but little, and all through the night she kept saying to herself:

“If only it will not rain to-morrow!”

It was going to be a beautiful day. Bettina is a little superstitious. She takes new hope, new courage.

The day begins well, it will end well.

Mr. Scott returned several days before. Bettina was waiting on the wharf at Havre, with Suzie and the children.

After embracing them all, tenderly, Richard turning to his sister-in-law, said, laughing:

“Well, when is the marriage to be?”

“What marriage?”

“With M. Jean Reynaud.”

“Oh, my sister has written you?”

“Suzie? Not at all. Suzie has not told me a word. It is you, Bettina, who have written me. This young officer has been the only subject of all your letters for the last two months.”

“Of all my letters?”

“Yes, and you have written me more frequently and more at length than usual. I do not complain of it, but only ask you when you will present my brother-in-law to me.”

He jested, in saying this; but Bettina replied:

“Very soon, I hope.”

Mr. Scott found that it was a serious matter. As they went back on the train, Bettina asked Richard for her letters to him. She read them over again. He was indeed the subject of these letters. There she found their first meeting related in minutest detail. Here was the description of Jean in the parsonage garden, with his straw hat and his bowl of salad, and here again monsieur Jean, and everywhere monsieur Jean. She discovered that she had loved him much longer than she thought.

And now, it is the 10th of August. Breakfast is just over at the château. Harry and Bella are impatient. They know that in an hour or two the regi-

ment will come through the village. They have been promised to be taken to see the soldiers pass by, and for them as well as for Bettina, the return of the Ninth Artillery is a great event.

“Aunt Betty,” said Bella “aunt Betty, come with us,”

“Yes, come,” said Harry “come; we will see our friend Jean on his big grey horse.”

Bettina is firm, she refuses; and yet, what a temptation!

But no, she will not go; she will not see Jean until the evening, when she can have the decisive explanation for which she has prepared herself during these three weeks.

The children start off with their governesses. Bettina, Suzie and Richard, go into the park near the château, and as soon as they are seated:

“Suzie,” says Bettina, “I am going to remind you of your promise to-day. You remember what passed between us the night of our departure. It was agreed, that, if on the day of his return, I should say to you: ‘Suzie I am sure that I love him!’ that you would let me tell him so frankly, and ask him if he would have me for his wife.”

“Yes, I promised you that. But, are you very sure?”

“Perfectly sure. I warn you, then, that I intend to bring him here, to this very seat,” added she smiling, “and tell him in almost the same words what you once told Richard; that brought you good fortune, Suzie, you are perfectly happy. And I, I want to be happy too! Richard, Suzie has spoken to you of monsieur Reynaud.”

“Yes, and she has told me that there is no man she esteems more highly; but ——”

“But she has also told you that it was, perhaps, a little too obscure, a little too plebian a marriage for me. Oh! naughty sister! Would you believe, Richard, that I cannot rid her of this fear. She does not understand that I desire above all things, to love and to be loved. Would you believe, Richard, that she set a horrible snare for me last week! You know there is, in society, a prince Romanelli?”

“Yes, you might have been a princess.”

“That would not have been very difficult, I fancy. Well! one day I was so imprudent as to say to Suzie that, as a last resort, the Prince Romanelli might be acceptable to me. Can you imagine what she did? The Turners were at Trouville. She arranged a little plot, they made me breakfast with the prince, but the result was most disastrous. Acceptable! the two hours that I spent with him, I spent in asking myself how I could

ever have said such a thing. No, Richard; no, Suzie; I will be neither princess, nor countess, nor marchioness. I will be madame Jean Reynaud, if monsieur Jean Reynaud does not object; and that, is by no means certain."

The regiment was entering the village, and suddenly a gladsome, stirring flourish of trumpets was heard in the distance. All three stopped, silent. It was the regiment. It was Jean who was passing by. The sounds grew fainter and died away, and Bettina resumed :

"No, it is not certain. He loves me, however, and very much, but without really knowing what I am. I think that I deserve to be loved differently; I think that he would not be so afraid of me if he knew me better—and for that reason I ask permission to speak to him to-night, freely and openly."

"We consent," replied Richard, "we both consent. We know, Bettina, that you will never do anything that is not noble and generous."

"I will try, at least."

The children came running back. They had seen Jean; he was all white with dust; he had said good morning to them.

"Only," added Bella, "he was not nice; he did not stop to speak to us; he always did, but this morning he seemed not to want to."

“Yes, he wanted to,” replied Harry, “for at first he did stop, and then he changed his mind and went on.”

“Well, he did not anyway; and it is delightful to talk with an officer, especially when he is on horse-back!”

“It is not only that, but because we like Monsieur Jean so very much. If you knew, papa, how good he is and how he plays with us!”

“And what nice pictures he makes! Harry, do you remember the big punchinello, with his stick, that was so comical?”

“And the cat, there was a cat, too, just like our Guignol.”

The two children ran off, talking about their friend Jean.

“Decidedly,” said Mr. Scott, “every body in the house likes him.”

“And you will be like everybody else, when you know him,” replied Bettina.

The regiment trotted through the village out into the open highway. Here is the terrace where he discovered Bettina the other morning. Jean says to himself: “If she should be there!” He both fears and hopes. He lifts his head, he looks, she is not there!

He has not seen her again ! He will not see her again, at least for a long time. He will go to Paris this very evening, at six o'clock. One of the attachés of the minister of war takes an interest in him. He will try to be exchanged into another regiment !

Jean has reflected seriously while he was alone at Cercottes, and this was the result of his reflections : he cannot, he must not be Bettina's husband !

The men dismount in the court yard, at the barracks. Jean takes leave of his colonel and his comrades. All is over. He is free, he can go away. He does not go, however. He looks around him. How happy he was three weeks ago as he rode out of this same court yard, amid the rattling of the cannon over the pavement of Souvigny ! How sadly he will go out of it to-day ! Then, his life was here ; where will it be now ?

He enters, and goes to his apartment. He writes to Mrs. Scott ; he tells her that he is obliged to start at once for Paris ; that he cannot dine at the château ; he begs Madame Scott to remember him to Mademoiselle Bettina. Bettina ! Ah ! How hard it was for him to write that name ! He seals his letter. He sends it off immediately.

He makes his preparations for departure, then he will go to take leave of his godfather. That will be

the hardest. He will only speak to him of a short absence.

He opens one of his bureau drawers to take out some money. The first thing that meets his eyes, is a blue-tinted letter. It is the only note he ever received from her :

“ Will you be so kind as to send, by the bearer, the book of which you spoke to me last evening ? Perhaps it will be a little deep for me. I would like, however, to try to read it, *a tout à l'heure*. Come, as soon as possible.”

It is signed “*Bettina*.”

Jean reads these few lines over and over again. But very soon he can no longer read them, his eyes are dim.

“ That is all that will remain to me of her ! ” he says to himself.

At this same hour, the Abbé Constantin is *tête-à-tête* with Pauline. They were making up their accounts. The financial situation is admirable. More than two thousand francs on hand ! And the desires of Suzie and Bettina are realized. There are no longer any poor in the district. Old Pauline has, sometimes, even slight scruples of conscience.

“ Do you see, Monsieur le Curé,” says she, “ that perhaps we are giving a little too much. It will soon

be reported in the neighboring communes, that charity here has an open hand. And do you know what will happen one of these days? They will come to Longueval to be poor.”

The curé gives Pauline fifty francs; she goes out to take them to a poor man, who has broken his arm in falling from a load of hay.

The Abbé Constantin is alone in the parsonage. He is troubled. He watched for the arrival of the regiment; but Jean stopped only for a moment; he looked sad. For some time, the abbé has noticed that Jean no longer is in his accustomed good spirits. But the curé was not uneasy, believing it to be merely one of those little youthful vexations which do not concern a poor simple-hearted old priest. But to-day, Jean's pre-occupation was very evident.

“I will come to you presently, godfather,” he had said to the curé, “I want to talk with you.”

He had left him abruptly. The Abbé Constantin had not had time to give Loulou his lump of sugar, or rather his lumps of sugar—for he had put five or six in his pocket—considering that Loulou had well deserved such a treat, after his ten day's march. Besides, since Mrs. Scott came to the château, Loulou very often had several lumps of sugar. The Abbé Constantin had become a spendthrift, a prodigal; he felt

like a millionaire; Loulou's sugar was one of his follies. One day, he even came very near addressing to Loulou his same little stereotyped speech:

“This comes from the new owners of Longueval. Pray for them to-night.”

It was three o'clock when Jean arrived at the parsonage, and the curé immediately began:

“You told me that you wanted to talk with me. What is it about?”

“About something, godfather, which will surprise you, and grieve you; and which grieves me, too. I come to bid you farewell.”

“Farewell! You are going away?”

“Yes, I am going away.”

“When?”

“This very day, in two hours.”

“In two hours! But we are to dine at the château this evening.”

“I have just written to Mrs. Scott to excuse me. I am absolutely obliged to go.”

“Immediately?”

“Immediately.”

“And you are going?”

“To Paris.”

“To Paris! Why this sudden determination?”

“Not so sudden. I have thought about it for a long time.”

“And you have said nothing about it to me! Jean, there is something the matter. You are a man now, and I have no longer a right to treat you as a child; but, you know how much I love you. If you have troubles, or sorrows, why not tell them to me? Perhaps I could give you good counsel. Jean, why are you going to Paris?”

“I would rather not tell you, it will grieve you; but you have a right to know. I am going to Paris to ask to be exchanged into another regiment.”

“Into another regiment? To leave Souvigny?”

“Yes, precisely, to leave Souvigny for some time, for a little while; but at all events to leave Souvigny; that is what I want, that is what is necessary.”

“And I, Jean; you do not think of me? For a little while! a little while! but that is all I have to live, a little while. And during these last days which I owe to God’s mercy, it was my happiness, Jean, yes, it was my happiness to have you here, near me. And you would go away! Jean, wait a little, be patient, it will not be very long; wait until the good God has called me to Himself; wait until I am gone to meet your father and your mother again on the other side. Do not go away, Jean, do not go away!”

“If you love me; I, too, love you, and you know it well.”

“Yes, I know it.”

“I have the same tenderness for you that I had when I was a little child, when you took me home, when you brought me up. My heart has not changed, it will never change. But if duty, if honor compel me to go . . . ”

“Ah! if it is duty, if it is honor, I will say no more, Jean. All must yield to that, all, all! I have always found you a good judge of your duty, a good judge of your honor. Go, my child, go. I ask you nothing. I desire to know nothing.”

“Ah! but I want to tell you all,” cried Jean, overcome by his emotion. “And it is better that you should know all. You will remain here, you will return to the château, you will see her again. She . . . ”

“Who, she?”

“Bettina!”

“Bettina!”

“I love her, godfather, I love her!”

“Oh, my poor boy!”

“Forgive me for speaking to you of such things; but I tell them to you, as I would tell them to my father. And, then, I have never had any one to speak to about it, and that stifles me. Yes, it is a madness

that has taken possession of me little by little, in spite of myself; for you can well understand, *mon dieu!* It was here that I first began to love her. When she came with her sister, you know, and the little rolls of money, and when her hair tumbled down, and that evening, the month of Mary! Since then I have been permitted to see her freely, familiarly; and you yourself have talked of her to me continually, you have extolled to me her sweetness, her goodness. How many times you have told me that there was no one in the world lovelier than she!”

“And I thought so, and I think so still; and no one knows her better than myself, for I alone have seen her among the poor. If you knew how tender and brave she is on our rounds in the morning! Neither misery nor suffering dismay her. But I am wrong to tell you all this.”

“No, no, I will not see her again; but I like to hear you speak of her.”

“You will never in your life, Jean, find a better woman, or one who has a more noble character. One day when she took me out with her in her carriage, full of playthings—she was carrying the playthings to a little sick girl; and in giving them to her, she talked so sweetly to the little thing, to make her smile and to amuse her, that I thought of you—and I remember

now that I said to myself: ‘Ah! if only she were poor!’”

“Yes, if only she were poor! but she is not!”

“Oh! no. But what can be done, my poor child. If it pains you to see her, to live near her, then, so that you may not suffer, go away. Jean, it must be; go away; and yet, and yet——”

The old priest grew thoughtful, and leaning his head in his hands, was silent for several minutes; then he continued:

“And yet, Jean, do you know what I am thinking about? I have seen a great deal of mademoiselle Bettina since she came to Longueval. And, I have been thinking—it did not surprise me then—it seemed so natural that every one should be interested in you; but, indeed, she was always talking of you, yes, always.”

“Of me?”

“Yes, and of your father, and of your mother. She was curious to know all about your life, she asked me to explain to her what a soldier’s life was like—a true soldier, who loved his profession, and performed its duties conscientiously. It is strange, since you have told me this, what a tide of memories comes back to me. A thousand little things recur to me. For instance, she came back from Havre, day before yesterday, at

three o'clock. Well, in an hour after her arrival she was here. And, immediately, she began to talk about you. She asked me if you had written, if you had been ill, when you would arrive, at what hour, if the regiment would come through the village."

"It is useless, godfather, to recall all this."

"No, it is not useless. She seemed so glad, so happy, even, that she was to see you again. She intended to make a *fête* of the dinner to-night. She was to present you to her brother-in-law. There is no one at the château, not a single guest. She made a point of that; and I remember her last words, as she stood in the door: 'There will be only five of us,' she said to me, 'you and Monsieur Jean, my sister, my brother-in-law, and I.' And she added, laughingly: 'A real family dinner.' Her last words, just as she was going, were: 'a real family dinner!' Do you know, Jean, what I think?"

"You must not think it, godfather, it must not be!"

"Jean, I think that she loves you!"

"And I, I think so too!"

"You, too!"

"When I left her, three weeks ago, she was so agitated, so moved! She saw that I was sad and unhappy. She did not want to let me go. We were on the steps of the château. I had to fly—yes—fly. I should

have spoken, have told her all. After going a little way I stopped, and looked back. She could no longer see me. I was in the darkness. But I could see her. She stood there in the rain, motionless, her arms and shoulders bare, looking after me. Perhaps I am foolish to think so. Perhaps it was only a feeling of pity. But no, it was something more than pity; for, do you know what she did the next morning? She came out at five o'clock, in all the storm, to see me go by with the regiment, and, that is the way in which she bade me adieu. Oh! godfather! godfather!"

"But then," said the poor curé completely overwhelmed, completely bewildered, "but then I do not understand it at all. If you love her, Jean, and if she loves you!"

"But it is for that very reason that I must go away. If it only concerned me! If I were sure that she had not discovered my love, sure that she was not afflicted by it, I would stay; I would stay, if only for the pleasure of seeing her, and I would love her from afar without any hope, for nothing but the happiness of loving her. But she is perfectly conscious of it, and far from discouraging me. It is just this which compels me to go away."

"No, I cannot understand it. I know very well, my poor child, that we are talking about matters on

which I am not an authority ; but, at least you are, both of you good, young and attractive. You love her, she would love you, and you cannot ! ”

“ But her money, godfather ; but her money ! ”

“ What matters her money ! Her money has nothing to do with it ! Is it on account of her money that you love her ? It is rather in spite of her money. Your conscience can rest easy in that respect, and that is enough. ”

“ No, that is not enough. It is not enough to have a good opinion of one’s self ; it is necessary that others should be of the same opinion. ”

Oh ! Jean, among all who know you, who could misjudge you ? ”

“ Who knows ? and then there is something else besides this question of money, something more serious and important. I am not a suitable husband for her. ”

“ And who is more worthy than you ? ”

“ It is not a question of my worth, it is a question of what she is, and of what I am ; it is a question of asking myself what her life ought to be, and what my life ought to be. One day, Paul—you know he has rather a coarse way of saying things, but that often gives force to an idea—we were talking of her, and, Paul, suspecting nothing, or he would not have said it, he is very good hearted—well, Paul said to me :

‘What she needs is a husband who devotes himself to her, entirely to her, a husband who has no other care than to make her life a perpetual *fête*; in short, a husband who gives her the worth of her money.’ You know me. Such a husband, I cannot, I ought not to be. I am a soldier, and I wish to remain a soldier. If the varying fortunes of my profession should some day send me to a little post in the Alps, or to some out of the way village in Algeria, can I ask her to follow me? Can I condemn her to the life of a soldier’s wife, which is, in fact, the life of a soldier! Think of the life she now leads, with all its luxury, all its pleasures!”

“Yes,” said the abbé, “this is a more serious question than the money.”

“So serious, that no hesitation is possible. While I was alone, in camp, these last three weeks, I have thought it all over; I have thought of nothing else, and loving her as I love her, reasons must be very powerful which can let me see my duty clearly. I must go away, far, very far away. I shall suffer much, but I ought not to see her again! I ought not to see her again!”

Jean dropped into a chair by the hearth, and sat there overwhelmed with his sorrow. The old priest gazed at him sadly.

“Oh! to see you so unhappy! my poor child! that such grief should come to you! It is very sad, very cruel—”

At this moment there was a light knock at the door.

“Do not be uneasy, Jean,” said the curé; “I will not let anyone come in.”

The abbé went to the door, opened it, and started back as if he had seen an unexpected apparition.

It was Bettina. She saw Jean instantly, and going straight to him:

“You?” she cried. “Oh! how glad I am!”

He had risen, she took both his hands, and addressing the abbé:

“Pardon me, Monsieur le Curé, if I greet him first. I saw you yesterday, and I have not seen him for three whole weeks; not since that evening when he went away so sad and suffering.”

She still held Jean’s hands. He had not strength to move, or say one word.

“And are you better now?” continued Bettina; “No, not yet, I can see it, still sad. Ah! how well it was that I came! I must have had an inspiration. And yet, I am a little, very much, embarrassed to find you here. You will understand when you know what I come to ask your godfather.”

She dropped Jean's hands and turning to the abbé:
"I come, Monsieur le Curé, to beg you to listen to my confession. Yes, my confession. But you need not go away, monsieur Jean. I will make my confession publicly. I am very willing to speak before you, and I think, perhaps, it will be better. Let us sit down."

She was full of courage and confidence. She was in a fever, but it was the fever which gives to the soldier on the field of battle, order, heroism, and disregard of danger.

The emotion which caused Bettina's heart to beat so quickly, was lofty and noble. She said to herself:

"I want to be loved! I want to love! I want to be happy! I want him to be happy! And, since he has not courage enough, I must have it for both of us; I must take the field alone, and with a fearless heart, march on to the conquest of our love, of our happiness."

Bettina's first words completely conquered both the abbé and Jean. They let her speak while they remained silent. They felt that the hour was, indeed, supreme, they knew that what was about to happen would be decisive and irrevocable; but they could not foresee. They sat down passively, almost automatically. They waited—they listened. Between these two be-

wildered men, Bettina, alone, was self-possessed. Her voice was clear and distinct as she began :

“ First, I will tell you Monsieur le Curé, to make your conscience entirely easy, that I am here with the full consent of my sister and my brother-in-law. They know why I came, they know what I am going to do. They not only know it, they approve of it. That is understood, is it not? Well! It is your letter, Monsieur Jean, which brings me here ; the letter in which you told my sister that you could not come to dine with us this evening, and that you were absolutely obliged to go away. This letter disarranged all my plans. This evening, with the same permission of my sister and my brother-in-law, I wanted to take you to the park, Monsieur Jean, to there sit down with you. I was even so childish as to choose the very place, beforehand, and deliver a little address to you—carefully prepared and studied, and almost learned by heart ; for ever since your departure, I have thought of nothing else. I recite it to myself from morning till night. This was what I proposed to do, and you can understand how disconcerted I was when your letter came. I reflected a little while, and then I said to myself, that, if I addressed my little speech to your godfather, it would be almost the same as if to yourself. I have therefore come, Monsieur le Curé, to beg you to listen to me.”

“ I am listening to you,” faltered the abbé.

“ I am rich, Monsieur le Curé, very rich ; and to be frank, I love my money—yes, I love it very much. I owe to it the luxury which surrounds me, this luxury, which, I admit—this is a confession—is not disagreeable to me. My excuse is, that I am very young ; perhaps, this will pass away with age. But I am not quite sure of it. And I have another excuse ; it is, that if I love my money for all the pleasures it procures for me, I love it still more for the good it enables me to do to those around me. I love it selfishly, if you will, for the delight which the pleasure of giving affords me. Indeed, I do not think my fortune fell into bad hands. For, Monsieur le Curé, it seems to me, that just as you have the charge of souls, so I have charge of my riches. I always say to myself : ‘ Above all things, I desire that my husband shall be worthy to share this immense fortune ; I want to be sure that he will help me to make good use of it while I live, and after my death, should I die first. Besides I must love the man, who will be my husband !’ And, here, Monsieur le Curé, is where my confession really begins. There is a man, who, for the last two months, has done all that he could to conceal his love from me. But, I do not doubt that he loves me—for you do love me, Jean, do you not ?”

“Yes,” said Jean, in a low voice, looking down, guiltily, “yes, I love you!”

“I was sure of it, but I wanted to hear you say so. And now, Jean, I implore you, do not say a single word. It would be useless, and only trouble me, and hinder me from going straight through to the end, and telling you what I have resolved to say to you. Promise me to sit there, silently, and hear me.”

“Yes, I promise.”

Bettina lost her self-command for a moment, and her voice trembled; she went on, however, with a playfulness that was a little forced:

“Monsieur le Curé, I do not positively accuse you of all that has happened; but, nevertheless it is a little your fault.”

“My fault!”

“Ah! you must not speak, either. Yes, I repeat it, your fault. I am sure that you have told Jean a great deal about me, a great deal too much. Perhaps, except for that, he would not have thought of me. And at the same time, you have told me a great deal about him—not too much; no, no, but at least a good deal! Then I, having so much confidence in you, began to watch and study him more attentively. I began to compare him with all those who, during the past year, had asked my hand in marriage. It seemed to me that he was

superior to them in every respect. At last, one day, or rather one evening—it was three weeks ago, the night before your departure, Jean, I discovered that I loved you. Yes, Jean, I love you! I implore you, Jean, not to speak, sit still, and do not come near me. I had plenty of courage when I came, but you see I am losing it. I have still something to say to you, most important of all. Jean, listen to me. I do not desire an answer prompted by your emotion. I know that you love me. If you should marry me, it must be not only from love but from reason. During the fortnight which preceded your departure, you took such pains to shun me; you were so reserved when we met, that I could not be myself with you. Perhaps, there are some traits in my character of which you know nothing as yet. Jean I understand you, I know what I should undertake in becoming your wife; and I would be, not only loving and tender, but brave and strong. Your whole life is known to me, your godfather has told it to me. I know why you are a soldier, I know what duties and sacrifices you may have to encounter in the future. Jean, do not distrust me; I will not dissuade you from any of these duties and sacrifices. You may have thought that I would wish you to abandon your profession. Never! never! I would never ask you to do such a thing. I love

you, and I wish you to be just what you are. It is because your life is different, and better than the lives of all those who have sought me for a wife, that I have wished you to be my husband. I would not love you so well, perhaps, I would not love you at all—though that would be hardly possible—if you lived as they do. When I could, I would follow you; and everywhere that you were, my duty and my happiness would be. And if a day should come, when you could not take me with you, a day when you must depart alone, oh! Jean! that day I promise you I will be brave, so that you shall not lose your courage. And now, Monsieur le Curé, it is not to him, it is to you that I address myself, and I want you to answer me: Tell me, if he loves me, and if he thinks me worthy of him, would it be just to punish me so severely for my fortune? Ought he not to consent to be my husband?”

“Jean,” said the old priest, solemnly, “marry her; it is your duty, and it will be your happiness!”

Jean approached Bettina, took her in his arms, and imprinted his first kiss on her forehead.

Bettina gently released herself, and addressing the abbé:

“And now, Monsieur le Curé, I want to ask you something more; I wish, I wish—”

“What is it you wish?”

“I wish, Monsieur le Curé, that you would kiss me too.”

The old priest kissed her on both cheeks, and Bettina went on:

“You have often told me, Monsieur le Curé, that Jean was like a son to you, and may not I be like a daughter? Then you will have two children.”

* * * * *

A month afterwards, on the 12th of September, Bettina, in the simplest of bridal robes, stood before the altar in the church of Longueval.

Nannie Turner, had solicited the honor of playing the organ on this joyful occasion; for the poor little harmonium had disappeared. An organ, with its shining pipes, had been put up in the gallery of the church. It was Miss Percival's wedding present to the Abbé Constantin.

The old curé said the mass. Jean and Bettina knelt before him; he pronounced the benediction, and stood with outstretched hands a few moments in prayer, invoking all the graces of heaven upon the heads of his two children.

Then the organ began to play that same reverie of Chopin's which Bettina played the first time that she

came into the little village church, where the happiness of her life was to be consecrated.

And this time it was Bettina who wept.



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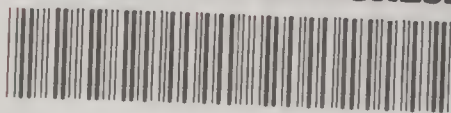
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